

STORIES *and* EPISODES

OMITTED FROM HOUSEHOLD EDITIONS OF ITALIAN CLASSICS

CONTENTS

	PAGE.
GIOVANNI BOCCACCIO—	
Seven Tales	I
MASUCCIO SALERNITANO—	
Nine Stories	63
GIOVANNI STRAPAROLA—	
Five Fables	159
GIOVANNI FIORENTINO—	
Three Novels	213
LUDOVICO ARIOSTO—	
Episodes from Orlando Furioso	253
BENVENUTO CELLINI—	
Episodes from his Memoirs	413
GABRIELE d'ANNUNZIO—	
An Episode from The Flame	425

Stack

Annex

5

106

967

SEVEN TALES FROM THE DECAMERON

BY

GIOVANNI BOCCACCIO

THE following seven tales (1313-1375) are by Giovanni Boccaccio, and are taken from his *Decameron* ("ten days"), a famous collection of tales published in 1353. They were supposed to have been told to one another by a company of young men and women, of noble birth, who had fled to the country from Florence to escape the horrors of one of the greatest plagues that ever swept over Europe (in 1348). Few works have had an equal influence on literature with the *Decameron*. Chaucer and Shakespeare made free use of its plots, the former in some instances merely versifying the novels of the Italian writer. Burton, in his *Anatomy of Melancholy*, tells us that one of the great amusements of our ancestors was reading the *Decameron* aloud. The stories here presented are among the most famous of these ancient tales.

ARGUMENT

The Sultan of Babylon sends one of his daughters to be married to the King of Algarve, but by divers accidents in the space of four years she falls into the hands of nine different men. At length, being restored to her father, she goes to the King as a maid, and becomes his wife.

IT is no easy matter for us, most gracious ladies, to know what is good for us. How many, supposing if they were rich that they should then live securely and at ease, not only offer up their prayers to God, but studiously incur all kinds of danger to become so; which, when effected, has been the occasion of their losing their lives by the covetous hands of those who, before they had attained to riches, were their entire friends. How many from a low estate have made their way to a throne,

amidst a thousand dangers, and through the blood of their brethren and friends, expecting to find supreme felicity there, and have endured the infinite cares and anxieties incident to that station, but to find to their cost, at last, that poison is often mingled in the golden cups of princes. Many there are who covet some bodily advantage, as strength, beauty, etc., with which they who are endowed are taught, that death, or a most calamitous life, is often occasioned thereby. But not to speak in detail of all our frail desires, I dare affirm, that there is not one of them which we can fix upon with any certainty of being happy in that choice. The safest way then is to leave all to the good providence of God, who best knows our wants, and is most able to supply them. Men offend in coveting many things; but you ladies sin chiefly in one point, namely, in the desire of beauty; in-somuch, that not being satisfied with that share of it given you by nature, you call in the assistance of art, to improve it. It is upon this account that I shall relate what happened to a beautiful Saracen lady, who, in the space of four years, was, for her beauty, married nine several times.

It is now a long time since there lived a sultan of Babylon, called Beminedab, who was highly fortunate in all his affairs. Amongst other children, both male and female, he had a daughter named Alatiel, who, in the opinion of all that saw her, was the fairest lady in the whole world. Now forasmuch as the king of Algarve had afforded him great assistance in a defeat he had inflicted on a most numerous army of Arabians that had assailed him, and had afterwards demanded Alatiel in marriage, he consented as a most special favor: and providing a ship, well equipped for the purpose, with all necessary provisions, and sending an honorable train both of lords and ladies to bear her company, he commended her to the protection of Heaven, and sent her to

his ally. The sailors, as soon as a fit opportunity offered, hoisted their sails, and leaving the port of Alexandria, sailed prosperously many days; when, having passed the island of Sardinia, and now seeming to be near the end of their voyage, on a sudden contrary winds arose, which were so boisterous, and bore so hard upon the ship, that they often gave themselves over for lost. Nevertheless, for two days together, they bravely tried all the means they could devise to weather it out; but all to no purpose, for every blast was worse than the former. Unable by any mode of reckoning to calculate where they were, or to see to any distance, on account of the clouds and darkness, the ship sprang a leak by night, not far from Majorca. Perceiving no hopes of escaping, and every one caring for himself only, they lowered a small boat into the sea, choosing rather to trust their lives to it than to the sinking ship. All the men that were in the ship crowded into the boat one after another; although those who were first down made strong resistance with their drawn weapons against other followers: and the consequence was, that thinking to avoid death by this means, they ran directly into it; for the boat, not being able to bear them all, sank at once to the bottom, and all on board of it perished.

The ship being driven furiously by the winds, though it was leaking and half full of water, was at last stranded near the island of Majorca, no other person remaining on board but the lady and her women, all lying as it were lifeless, through the terror occasioned by the tempest. The ship struck with such violence, that it was fixed in the sand about a stone's throw from the shore; where it continued all that night, the winds not being able to move it. When daylight appeared, and the storm was somewhat abated, the lady, almost dead, lifted up her head, and began, weak as she was, to call first one and then another of her servants; but all to no

purpose, for those she called for were far out of hearing. Receiving no answer, and seeing no one, she was greatly astonished; and raising herself up as well as she could, she beheld the ladies that were of her company, and some other of her women, lying all about her; and trying first to rouse one, and then another of them, she scarcely found any that had the least understanding left; so much had sickness and fear together affected them. This added greatly to her consternation; nevertheless, constrained by necessity, seeing that she was alone, she knew not where, she shook those that were living till she made them get up; and perceiving that they were utterly ignorant of what had become of all the men, and seeing the ship driven upon the sands, and full of water, she began with them to lament most grievously.

It was noon-day before they could descry any person on shore, or elsewhere, to afford them the least assistance. At length about that time, a gentleman, whose name was Pericon da Visalgo, passing that way, with many of his servants, on horseback, upon seeing the ship, guessed what had happened, and immediately sent one of them on board, to see what was remaining in her. The servant got into the ship with some difficulty, and found the lady with the little company that was left her, who had all hidden themselves, through fear, under the deck. As soon as they saw him, they begged piteously for mercy; but finding that he did not understand their language, nor they his, they endeavored, by signs, to inform him of their misfortune. The servant carried the best account he could of what he had seen, to his master, who ordered the ladies, and everything that was in the ship of any value, to be brought on shore, and conveyed to one of his castles, where he endeavored to comfort them under their misfortunes by the most generous entertainment. From the rich dress of the princess, he inferred that she was some person of great consequence,

in which opinion he was confirmed by the great respect paid to her by all the women; and although she was pale and in disorder, through the great fatigue she had sustained, yet was he much taken with her beauty, and he resolved, if she had no husband, to make her his wife; or, if he could not have her as such, still not to lose her entirely. Pericon was a man of stern looks, and robust person; and having treated the lady well for some time, by which means she had recovered her beauty, he was grieved that they could not understand each other, and that he was unable to learn who she was; yet, being passionately in love, he used every engaging art he could devise to bring her to a compliance, but all to no purpose; she refused all familiarities with him, which but inflamed him the more. This the lady perceived, and finding, after some stay there, by the customs of the place, that she was among Christians, and in a land where, to make her rank known, even if she knew how, would be of no great service to her; supposing also, that, at last, Pericon would gain his will, if not by fair means, yet by force, she resolved, with a true greatness of spirit, to vanquish her evil fortune, and she enjoined her women, of whom she had but three now alive, never to disclose her quality, unless there should be hopes of regaining their liberty. She exhorted them to maintain their chastity, and declared her own fixed resolution never to yield her person to any one besides her husband; for which they all commended her, promising to preserve their honor as much as lay in their power.

Every day did Pericon's passion increase so much the more as the thing desired was near, and yet unattainable: wherefore, perceiving that entreaty was to no purpose, he resolved to try what art and contrivance could do, reserving force to the last. Having once observed that wine was pleasing to Alatiel, as a beverage she had not been accustomed to, it being forbidden by her country's

law, he determined to surprise her by means of this minister of Venus. Affecting now to have given over his amorous pursuit, which she had used her best endeavors to withstand, he provided one night an elegant entertainment, at which she was present, when he gave it in charge to the servant who waited upon her, to serve her with several wines mingled together, which he accordingly did. Alatiel, suspecting no such treachery, and pleased with the rich flavor of the wine, drank more than was consistent with modesty, and, forgetting all her past troubles, became gay and merry; so that, seeing some women dance after the custom of Majorca, she also began to dance after the manner of the Alexandrians; which, when Pericon observed, he supposed himself in a fair way of success, and plying her with still more wine, continued this revelling far into the night. At length, when the guests departed, he went with the lady into her chamber, and she being despoiled of modesty for the time, by the fumes of the wine, undressed before him, as if he had been one of her women, and got into bed. He instantly followed, caught her in his arms, and took his fill of pleasure, without encountering any resistance on her part. Alatiel, who till then had never had a notion of that sort of pastime, liked it so well that she repented of not having yielded sooner to Pericon's solicitations; and thenceforth, so far was she from waiting to be pressed, that she often invited him to the sport, not by words, indeed, since she could not speak his language, but by acts which were quite as much to the purpose.

At length fortune, not content with having brought it to pass that she who was to have been the wife of a king, should become the mistress of a nobleman, prepared for her a more barbarous and cruel alliance. Pericon had a brother, twenty-five years of age, of a most commanding person, called Marato; who, having

seen her, flattered himself, from her behavior towards him, that he was not displeasing to her. Supposing, also, that nothing obstructed his happiness, except the watch which his brother kept over her, he conceived a most atrocious design, nor was it long before he carried it into effect. There chanced to be a ship in the haven at that time, laden with merchandise, bound for Chia-renza in Romania. Two young Genoese were the masters, and as they only waited for the first fair wind to go out, Marato made a contract with them, to receive him with the lady the following night. When the time came, having ordered how the thing should be managed, he went openly to the house, nobody having the least mistrust of him, and took with him some trusty friends, whom he had secured for that service, and whom he concealed about the place. Then, in the middle of the night, he opened the door to them, and they murdered Pericon as he was asleep in bed with the lady, and threatened to kill her too, if she made the least noise. Then, carrying off everything of value they could lay hands on, they hastened without discovery to the harbor, where Marato and the lady instantly went on board, while his companions returned about their business. The wind was fair, and the ship went to sea at once. The lady seemed for awhile sunk in hopeless grief under this second blow of misfortune; but her ravisher had a talisman endowed with great consoling virtues, and he employed it so well that by and bye she began to have the same affection for him as she had entertained for his brother.

And now all seemed to go smoothly, when fortune, as if not content with what she had already suffered, visited her with new sorrows. Her beauty and loveliness were such, as to enamor the two masters of the ship, who neglected all other business to serve and please her; taking care, all the while, that Marato should have

no cause to suspect it. Being apprized of each other's love, they had a consultation together about it, and agreed to have her in common between them, as if love, like merchandise, admitted of partnership. But observing that she was narrowly watched by Marato, and their design thereby frustrated, they took the opportunity one day, as he was looking over the stern, while the ship was under full sail, to go behind and throw him overboard; and the ship had sailed on a full mile before he was missed. As soon as the lady heard that he was lost beyond recovery, she was plunged into fresh sorrow, lamenting her lost husband as much on her own account as his. The two lovers did all they could to console her, using many kind and tender expressions, which she did not understand; and after some little time, imagining that she was sufficiently comforted, they fell into a dispute together which should be the first to enjoy her. Each obstinately insisting on his own claim, high words arose, presently their knives were out, and before the ship's crew could part them, one lay dead, and the other desperately wounded. This occasioned fresh uneasiness to the lady, who now saw herself alone, without any one to advise and help her; she was fearful, also, of the resentment of the two masters' relations and friends; but the entreaties of the wounded survivor, and their speedy arrival at Chiarenza, saved her from the danger of death.

She went on shore with the wounded man, and they continued together at an inn; whilst the fame of her beauty was spread all over the city, till it reached the ears of the Prince of Morea, who was then by chance at Chiarenza. He was impatient to get sight of her; and after he had seen her, he was so charmed that he could think of nothing else. Being told in what manner she came thither, he began to contrive means how to obtain her; which, when the man's relations understood, they

immediately sent her to him, to his great joy, and hers too, for she now thought herself freed from all danger. The Prince, perceiving her rare accomplishments, joined to a matchless person, though he could have no information concerning her, yet concluded that she must be nobly descended; and such was his fondness for her, that he treated her not as a mistress, but a wife. She now recollected what she had already suffered, and being pretty well satisfied with her present situation, began to be easy and cheerful, while her charms increased to that degree, that she was the chief subject of discourse throughout Romania.

Hereupon the Duke of Athens, a young and gay person, a relation also to the Prince, had a mind to see her; he came, therefore, one day to Chiarenza with a noble retinue, under pretence of visiting his kinsman, as he had often done before, and was handsomely entertained. Some days after his arrival, contriving to turn the conversation to the subject of the lady's great beauty, the Duke asked whether it was such as fame had reported. "Far greater," replied the Prince, "but let your own eyes convince you, and not my bare assertion." The Duke soliciting the Prince very earnestly to gratify his curiosity, they went into Alatiel's apartment together, when she received them with great affability and cheerfulness, being apprized of their coming. Though they could not have the pleasure of conversing together, as she understood little or nothing of their language, yet they gazed upon her, the Duke more especially, as a prodigy of nature, scarcely believing her to be a mortal creature; and, without perceiving how much amorous poison he imbibed through his eyes, and thinking only to gratify himself with the sight of her, he soon became over head and ears in love.

After they had parted from her, and he had time to reflect, he began to think the Prince the happiest per-

son in the universe, in being possessed of such a beauty; and, after much musing upon it, having more regard to his lust than to his honor, he resolved at all hazards to deprive him of that bliss, and secure it for himself. Having a heart to put what he had resolved in speedy execution, he set all reason and justice aside, and bent all the powers of his mind to devise a fit stratagem for his purpose.

One day, therefore, according to a most wicked agreement, which he had made with the Prince's valet de chambre, one Ciuriaci, he gave secret orders to have his horses and things got ready for a sudden departure; and that night, himself and a friend, both armed, were stealthily admitted by the servant into the Prince's chamber. There they found the lady fast asleep, and the Prince standing naked at a window that looked towards the sea, to take the cool air, the weather being very hot. Having previously instructed his friend what he would have done, the Duke went softly up to the window, stabbed his kinsman with a dagger through the small of his back, and threw him out. Now the palace was seated upon the seashore, and very lofty; and the window at which the Prince had stood, was directly over a spot little frequented, and covered by the ruins of some houses which the waves had beaten down; there was, therefore, no great likelihood, as the Duke had foreseen, of the body being soon discovered. When that part of the work was over, the Duke's companion took a cord, which he carried with him for that purpose, and making believe as if he was going to caress Ciuriaci, he threw it about his neck, drew it so tight as to prevent his crying out, and the Duke coming to his assistance, they soon dispatched the fellow, and threw him down after the Prince. This being done, and plainly perceiving that they were not heard or seen by the lady, or any one else, the Duke took a light in his hand, and

going softly to the bed, where she lay in a sound sleep, he gently uncovered her from head to foot, and stood beholding her for some time with the utmost admiration. If she had appeared so charming before in her clothes, what was she now in her naked loveliness? Fired with still hotter desire, reckless of the guilty deed he had just committed, he crept into bed to her, with his hands yet reeking with blood, she taking him all the while for the Prince. After he had been with her for some time, he ordered his people to carry her off in such a manner that she could make no outcry; and going out at the same back door at which he had entered, he set her on horseback, and bore her away towards Athens. But, as he was married, he did not choose to bring her thither, but left her at one of his country seats on the seashore, a little way out of town. There the unhappy princess was secretly detained a prisoner, but with strict orders to her attendants to gratify her wishes in every other respect.

The Prince's servants waited that morning till nine o'clock, expecting his rising; but hearing nothing of him, they opened the chamber doors, which were not locked, and finding nobody within, they concluded that he and the lady were gone privately to some other place to divert themselves for a few days, and therefore they thought no more about the matter. The next day it happened, by great chance, that a fool going among those ruinous houses where the dead bodies were lying, took hold of the cord that was about Ciuriaci's neck, and dragged him along after him. The body was recognized by many astonished beholders, who, by fair words and much persuasion, prevailed upon the fool to show them where he had found it; and there, to the great grief of the whole city, they saw the Prince's body also, which they caused to be interred with all due pomp and reverence. Inquiring afterwards who could have com-

mitted so horrid a deed, and perceiving that the Duke of Athens was not to be found, but was gone privately away, they judged that he had done it, and taken the lady away with him. Immediately they elected the Prince's brother to be their sovereign, inciting him to revenge the atrocious murder, and promising to assist him to the utmost of their power. The new sovereign, having ascertained beyond doubt the truth of these surmises, collected together all his relations, friends, and vassals, and mustering a powerful army, marched against the Duke, who had no sooner heard of these preparations than he too levied a great army. Many princes and lords also came to his aid; amongst the rest, Constantine, son of the Emperor of Constantinople, and Emanuel, his nephew, attended by a goodly body of troops. They were gladly received by the Duke, and still more so by the Duchess, who was daughter to the Emperor.

Things tending every day more and more to actual war, the Duchess had her brother and her cousin one day into her chamber, where, with abundance of tears, she recounted to them the whole history and occasion of the war, and the ill-usage she had received from the Duke on account of this woman, whom she believed he kept privately: and she conjured them very earnestly, for his honor as well as for her own ease and comfort, to give her their best assistance. The two young lords knew all this matter before, and therefore, without asking many questions, they comforted her as well as they could, and after ascertaining where the lady was kept, they took their leave. Hearing much talk of her beauty, they became very desirous of seeing her, and entreated the Duke to afford them that pleasure: and he, never considering what had happened to the Prince, promised to do so. Next day he ordered a magnificent entertainment to be prepared in a pleasant garden belonging to the palace where the lady was kept, and took

the two princes and some more friends to dine with her. Constantine was no sooner seated with her at table than he began to gaze upon her with intense admiration, inwardly declaring that he had never seen anything like her, and that the Duke, or any other person, was excusable, who, to possess so rare a beauty, should commit any act of baseness or treachery. Gazing still more and more upon her, and evermore with growing wonder and delight, it happened to him just as it had done to the Duke; for, going away quite enamored of her, he had given over all thoughts of the war, contriving only how to steal her away from the Duke, at the same time that he concealed his love from every one.

Whilst he was in this agitation, the Prince was advancing near the Duke's territories, whereupon the latter, with Constantine and the rest, marched out of Athens to secure the frontiers, and to prevent the Prince's passing any further. After remaining with the army for some days, Constantine, whose heart was still set upon the lady, and who thought that he might more easily compass his intent now that the Duke was absent, feigned himself extremely sick, and, with the Duke's consent, leaving the command of his troops to Emanuel, returned to Athens to his sister. Presently, after having led the latter to talk of her husband's baseness in keeping a mistress, he told her that if she would give her consent, he would rid her of that trouble, by removing the lady out of the way. The Duchess, supposing that this was spoken out of pure regard for her, and not to the lady, replied, that she should be very glad if it could be done in such a manner that the Duke should never know that she was any way accessory; this Constantine fully promised, and she accordingly agreed that he should do it as he thought most advisable. He provided, therefore, a light vessel, with all secrecy, and sent it one evening near to the garden where the lady was kept, having first

informed some of his people that were on board, what he would have them do. Taking others with him to the house, he was respectfully received by the servants in waiting there, and also by the lady herself, who talked with him at his request, their servants following them into the garden. There, drawing her aside toward a door which opened to the sea, as if he had business to communicate from the Duke, on a signal being given, the bark was brought close to the shore, and she was seized and carried to it, whilst he, turning back to the people that were with her, said—"Let no one stir or speak a word at the peril of their lives; for my design is not to rob the duke of his lady, but to take away the scorn he casts upon my sister." None being hardy enough to return an answer to this, Constantine went on board the vessel, and bade the men ply their oars stoutly, which they did to such effect that they reached Egina by the next morning. There they landed, and he enjoyed himself awhile with the lady, who had so much reason to deplore her fatal beauty. Thence they went to Chios, where, for fear of his father's anger, and to prevent her being taken away from him, he chose to abide as in a place of security; and though she seemed uneasy for a time, yet she soon recovered, as she had done before, and the consolations afforded her by Constantine reconciled her to her new lot.

In the mean time Osbech King of the Turks, who was constantly at war with the Emperor, came by chance to Smyrna, and hearing how Constantine was leading a lascivious life at Chios, with a mistress he had stolen, and with no provision made for his safety, he went privately one night with some armed vessels, and made a descent on the island, surprising many people in their beds before they knew of his coming upon them, and killing all that stood upon their defense; and after he had burnt and destroyed the whole country, he put the

prisoners and the booty which he had taken on board, and returned to Smyrna. Upon inspecting his captives, Osbech, who was a young man, saw Alatiel, and knowing that she was Constantine's mistress, because she was found asleep in his bed, he rejoiced greatly, and took her for his own wife, and they lived together very happily for several months.

Before this happened, the Emperor had been making a treaty with Bassano, King of Cappadocia, who was to fall on Osbech on one side, whilst he attacked him on the other; but they could not come to a full agreement, because Bassano stipulated for some things which the Emperor was unwilling to grant; but now, hearing of what had befallen his son, and being in the utmost concern, he immediately closed with the King of Cappadocia, requesting him to march with all expedition against Osbech, while he himself was preparing to fall upon him from another quarter. When Osbech heard of this, he assembled his army before he should be surrounded by two such mighty princes, and marched to meet the King of Cappadocia, leaving his lady behind, with a faithful servant of his, at Smyrna; and a battle soon ensued, in which Osbech's army was entirely routed, and himself slain.

Bassano advanced victorious to Smyrna, the people making their submission to him all the way as he went. But now Osbech's servant, Antiochus, who had the lady in charge, although he was in years, yet, seeing her so beautiful, and forgetting the regard which was due to his lord, soon became in love with her himself; and, as he understood her language, it was a great comfort to her, because she had been forced to live for some years like a deaf and dumb person, for want of understanding other people, or being understood by them. This gave him great advantages, and whilst his master was warring abroad, he spared no pains to gain her consent, in which

he succeeded so well, that from amicable intercourse they soon advanced to amorous dalliance. On hearing, however, that Osbech was slain, and that Bassano was carrying all before him, they did not wait for his coming upon them, but fled privately to Rhodes, taking with them everything of value belonging to Osbech. They had not been there long before Antiochus was taken extremely ill. There happened to be with him a merchant of Cyprus, who was a great friend of his, and finding himself at the point of death, he resolved to bequeath to him his wealth, and the care of his dear lady. Calling them both to him, therefore, he said:—"I find myself declining apace, which grieves me much, because I had never more pleasure in living than at present; yet one thing is a great comfort to me, namely, that I shall die in the arms of those two persons whom I love and value beyond all the rest of the world, that is to say, in yours, my dearest friend, and in that lady's, whom I have loved, ever since I have known her, more than my own life. I am uneasy, indeed, when I consider that I leave her here a stranger, and destitute both of help and advice, and should be infinitely more so if you were not with us, who, I know, will take the same care of her, on my account, as you would of myself. Therefore I entreat you, in case I should die, to take my affairs, and her too, under your protection, and to act, with regard to both, as you think will be most for the comfort of my departed soul.—And you, my dearest love, let me beg you never to forget me, that I may boast, in the next world, that I have been beloved by the fairest lady that ever nature formed; assure me of these two things, and I shall die satisfied."

The merchant and lady were both much concerned, and promised to fulfil his desires, if he should chance to die; and soon afterwards he departed this life, when they took care to have him decently interred. This being

done, and the merchant having despatched all his affairs, and wanting to return home in a Catalan ship that was there in port, he questioned the lady, to know what she intended to do, because it became necessary for him to go back to Cyprus. She was willing, she said, to go with him, hoping that for the love he bore toward his friend he would regard her as his own sister. He replied, that he was ready to oblige her in everything; and, that he might the better defend her from all injuries whatever, till they came to Cyprus, he suggested that she should rather call herself his wife than his sister. Going then on board ship, they had a cabin and one little bed allotted them, agreeably to the account they had given of themselves, by which means that thing was brought about, which neither of them intended when they came from Rhodes; for they forgot all the fine promises they had made to Antiochus, and before they reached Baffa, where the Cyprian merchant dwelt, they began to consider themselves as man and wife.

Now a certain gentleman happened to arrive at Baffa about that time, on his own private affairs, whose name was Antigono, one advanced in years, and of more understanding than wealth; for by meddling much in the affairs of the King of Cyprus, he had found fortune very unkind to him. One day, when the merchant was gone about his business into Armenia, Antigono happened to pass by the house where Alatiel lodged, and seeing her at the window, he took more than ordinary notice of her, on account of her beauty: till at length he began to recollect that he had seen her somewhere before, but could by no means remember where. She, also, who had long been the sport of fortune, and knew not that the time was now drawing near when her sorrows were to have an end, as soon as she saw Antigono, remembered that she had seen him in no mean station in her father's service at Alexandria. Having now great hopes of re-

gaining her former dignity by his advice and assistance, she took the opportunity of the merchant's absence to send for him. On his coming to her, she modestly asked him whether he was not Antigono of Famagosta, as she really believed. He answered, that he was, and added,—"Madam, I am convinced that I know you, but I cannot call to mind where it is that I have seen you; therefore, if it be no offense, let me entreat you to tell me who you are."

The lady, perceiving him to be the same person, wept very much, and throwing her arms about his neck, asked him at last, as one confounded with surprise, if he had never seen her at Alexandria? Then he immediately knew her to be Alatiel, the sultan's daughter, whom they supposed to have been drowned; and being about to pay homage to her, she would not suffer him to do it, but made him sit down. He then, in a most humble manner, asked her where she had been, and whence she now came? because for some years it had been believed, through all Egypt, that she was drowned. She replied, "I had much rather it had so happened than to have led such a life as I have done; and I believe my father, if he knew it, would wish the same." With these words the tears ran down her cheeks in great abundance. "Madam," he replied, "do not afflict yourself before it is necessary to do so; tell me only what has happened to you; perhaps it may be of such a nature that, by the help of God, we may find a remedy." "Antigono!" replied the fair lady, "I think when I see you that I behold my father: moved, therefore, with the like duty and tenderness that I owe to him, I shall reveal to you what I might have kept secret. There are few persons that I should desire to meet with sooner than yourself to advise me; if, therefore, when you have heard my whole story, you think there is any probability of restoring me to my former dignity, I must beg your assistance;

if you think there is none, then I conjure you to tell no person living that you have either seen or heard anything about me."

After this preamble, she gave a full account of what had befallen her, from the time of her shipwreck to that very hour, shedding abundance of tears during the whole relation. Antigono manifested sincere concern at what he had heard, and after thinking some little time about it, "Madam," he said, "since it has never been known, in all your misfortunes, who you were, I will restore you to your father, to whom you shall be more dear than ever and afterward you shall be married to the King of Algarve." On her inquiring how that could be brought about, he let her know in what manner he intended to do it; and to prevent all danger from delay, he returned directly to Famagosta, and waiting upon the King, thus addressed him:—"My liege, you may, if you please, do great honor to yourself, and service to me, who am impoverished on your account, and that, too, without incurring any expense." The King desiring to know by what means, Antigono answered: "A young lady is just come to Baffa, daughter to the Sultan, who was generally thought to have been drowned, and who, to preserve her honor, has undergone great calamities, and is now in poverty, and desirous of returning to her father: if, therefore, your majesty will deign to send her home under my conduct, it will redound greatly to your honor, and prove much to my advantage, nor can the Sultan ever forget the favor." The King moved by a truly royal spirit, replied, that he was well pleased with the proposal, and immediately had Alatiel brought in great state to Famagosta, where she was received with all honor and respect, both by himself and the Queen; and being questioned by them concerning her misfortunes, she made such answers as she had been taught beforehand by Antigono.

A few days afterwards, at her own request, she was sent with a great retinue both of lords and ladies, and conducted all the way by Antigono, to the Sultan's court, where, with what joy they were all received, it is needless here to mention. When they had rested awhile after their journey, the Sultan became desirous to know how it happened that his daughter was now living, and where she had been all this time, without his being ever able to hear a word about her. Thereupon Alatiel, who had all Antigono's lectures perfectly by heart, gave her father the following narration:

"You must know, my dear father, that about twenty days after my departure from you, our ship was split in the night by a violent tempest, and driven on the western coasts; nor did I ever learn what befell the men that were in it: I only remember this, that when daylight appeared, and I seemed recovered, as it were, from death to life, certain peasants of the country spying the wreck, came to plunder it; whilst I was carried first on shore, with two of my women, who were immediately borne away by some young fellows, and taken different ways, so that I could never learn what became of either of them. I also was seized by two of them, making the best defense I could; and as they were dragging me toward a wood by the hair of my head, four persons on horseback came riding by, when they immediately left me and fled. Then the gentlemen on horseback, who appeared to possess some authority, came to me, and we spoke to each other, without either knowing what the other said. At last, after conferring together, they sat me upon one of their horses, and carried me to a monastery of religious women, according to their laws, where I was kindly received, and always treated with honor; and there I joined them in paying great devotion to a certain idol of theirs, called San Cresci in Val Cava, which is held in the highest esteem by the women of that country.

After I had been there for some time, and learned a little of their language, they began to inquire of me who I was, and whence I came; and I (fearful of telling the truth, lest they should turn me out as an enemy to their religion) made them believe that I was daughter of a gentleman of Cyprus, who sending me to be married to one of Crete, we happened to be driven thither by ill weather, and shipwrecked. Conforming to their customs in many things, for fear of the worst, I was asked, at length, by the chief among them, whom they call Lady Abbess, whether I desired to return to Cyprus? I answered, that there was nothing I desired more. But she, tender of my honor, would never trust me with any persons that were going to Cyprus, till, about two months ago, certain French gentlemen with their ladies came that way, one of whom was related to the Abbess; and, understanding that they were going to visit the holy sepulcher at Jerusalem, where He whom they believe to be God was buried, after he had been put to death by the Jews, the Abbess recommended me to them, and desired that they would deliver me to my father at Cyprus. What respect and civilities I received both from the gentlemen and their ladies, would be needless to mention. Accordingly we went on ship-board, and came in a few days to Baffa, where I arrived a stranger to every person, and not knowing what to say to these gentlemen, who were to present me to my father; when behold (by the great providence of God), the first person I met with upon the shore was Antigono. I called to him in our own language (that none of them might understand us) and desired him to own me as his daughter. He easily understood my meaning, and showing great tokens of joy, entertained them as well as his narrow circumstances would allow, and brought me to the King of Cyprus, who received and sent me hither, with such marks of respect as I am no way able to relate:

if there be anything omitted in this relation, Antigono, who has often heard the whole from me, will report it."

Antigono, then turning to the Sultan, said, "My lord, according both to her own account, and the information of the gentlemen and their wives, she has said nothing but truth. One part only she has omitted, as not suiting with her great modesty to report, namely, what the gentlemen and their ladies told me of the most virtuous life that she led amongst those religious women, and their great concern at parting, which, if I were fully to recount to you, would take up both this day and night too. Let it suffice, then, that I have said enough (according to what I could both hear and see) to convince you that you have the fairest as well as the most virtuous daughter of any prince in the world."

The Sultan was overjoyed with this relation; begging, over and over, that God would pour down His blessings on all who had showed favor to his daughter; and particularly the King of Cyprus, who had sent her home so respectfully. Having bestowed great gifts upon Antigono, he gave him leave to return to Cyprus; and sent letters, as also a special ambassador to the King, to thank him on her account. And now, desiring that what he had formerly proposed should take effect: namely, that she should be married to the King of Algarve; he wrote to give him a full relation of the whole matter, adding, that he should send for her, if he desired the match to proceed. The King was much pleased with the news, and sent in great state, and received her as his queen; whilst she, who had passed through the hands of eight men, now came to him as a pure virgin, and lived happily with him all the rest of her life:—so true is the old saying, "Kissed lips lose no favor, but renew themselves like the moon."

[This story taken from the romance of Xenophon Ephesius, furnished La Fontaine with his '*La Fiancée du Roi de Garbe*.']

ARGUMENT

Masetto da Lamporecchio, pretending to be dumb, is taken in to be gardener to a convent of nuns: what happens in consequence.

THERE are many people, fair ladies, so simple as to imagine, that, after a young lady has put on the white veil, and the black hood, she ceases to have the feelings and passions of a woman, as if by becoming a nun she was converted into stone. If these people hear anything contrary to this opinion, they are as much offended as though some very heinous and unnatural crime was committed; never thinking of themselves, who cannot be satisfied, although they have the liberty of doing as they will; nor considering the prevalency of leisure and solitude. In like manner, there are others who think that the spade and pickax, with hard labor and gross feeding, quench all lustful appetites, depriving the people of all sense and understanding; but how much they are both mistaken, I shall, at the Queen's command, now show you, keeping close to the subject which she has given us.

There was formerly in our neighborhood (and may be still) a convent of nuns, famous for their sanctity. In this convent (which shall be nameless, because I would not lessen the characters of its pious inmates), there were only eight young ladies, with an Abbess; there was also a gardener to look after their fine garden, who, not being satisfied with his salary, made up his accounts with their steward, and returned to Lamporecchio, whence he came. Amongst many others who came to welcome him home, was a fine strapping young fellow named Masetto, who inquired of him where he had been all that time? The honest man (whose name was Nuto) told him. The other inquired again in what capacity he served the convent? "I had care of the garden," he

replied, "and used to go to the wood for fagots; I drew water for them also, with such-like services; but my wages were so small that they would scarcely find me shoes; and besides they are all so young and giddy, that I could do nothing to please them; for when I have been in the garden, one would cry to do this, and another do that, and another would take the spade out of my hand, and tell me 'that thing is in a wrong place,' and they have given me so much trouble altogether, that I have left them. The steward desired, at my departure, if I met with a proper person, to send him; but hang me if I do any such thing."

When Masetto heard this, he had a great desire to get among those nuns, guessing from what Nuto had said, that he might be able to gain his ends. But lest his purpose should be defeated, if he let the other into the secret, he said to him, "You did very right to come away: what has a man to do among so many women? He might as well be with as many devils: for it is not once in ten times they know what they would be at." After they had done talking together, Masetto began to contrive what method he should take to get introduced; and being assured that he could do all the work that Nuto had mentioned, he had no fears upon that account: all the danger seemed rather to be in his youth and person: whether he might not be rejected. After much reflection, he reasoned thus with himself: "I live far enough off and nobody knows me: suppose I feign myself dumb, they will certainly receive me then."

Resolved on this, without saying a word to any one about where he was going, he took an ax on his shoulder, and went like a poor man to the convent; and finding the steward in the courtyard, he made signs like a dumb person for a little bread, and that he would cleave wood if they had any occasion. The steward gave him something to eat, and afterward showed him divers

pieces of wood, which Nuto was not able to rend, but which Masetto, in a little time (being very strong), split all to pieces. The steward, having occasion to go to the wood, took him with him; where he made him fell several trees, load the ass with them, and drive it home before him: this Masetto did very well; and the steward wanting him for other things, he continued there for several days, till at length the Abbess saw him, and asked the steward what the man did there? "Madam," he replied, "this is a poor man, deaf and dumb, who came the other day to ask charity, which I gave him, and he has done many things for us since: I believe, if he knows anything of gardening and could be prevailed upon to stay, that he might be of good service; for we want such a person, and he is strong, and will do what work we please: besides, there will be no fear of his seducing any of the young ladies."—"Why, truly," quoth the Abbess, "you say right: see if he knows how to work, and if so, try to keep him; make much of him, give him a pair of shoes, and an old coat, and let him have his fill of victuals." This the steward promised to do. Masetto, who was at no great distance, but seemed busy in sweeping the court, heard all this, and said merrily to himself, "Yes, if you let me stay here, I'll do your business as it never was done before." The steward, who was aware that he knew how to work, now inquired of him by signs whether he was willing to stay: and Masetto having made signs that he was, the steward took him into the garden, showed him what he wished to have done, and left him there.

Now the nuns used to come every day to tease and laugh at the deaf and dumb gardener, and would say the naughtiest words in the world before him, imagining that he did not hear them; whilst the Abbess took no notice of all this, thinking perhaps that as the man could not wag his tongue, he was equally harmless in other

respects. One day when he had lain down to rest himself, two nuns, who were walking in the garden, came to the place where he pretended to be asleep: and as they stood looking at him, one, who was a little more forward than the other said, "Could I be assured of your secrecy, I would tell you of a thought I have often had in my head, which might be of service to yourself." "You may speak safely," said the other, "for I will never disclose it." Then said the first nun: "We are kept here in strict confinement, and not a man suffered to come near us, but our steward, who is old, and this dumb man. Now I have many and many a time heard from ladies who have come to see us, that all the other delights in the world are nothing to what a woman enjoys in a man's arms. I have often therefore had it in my mind to try the experiment with this dumb fellow, since no other is to be had; besides he is the fittest in the world for our purpose, being such an idiot, that he cannot expose us if he would; what is your opinion?" "Alas!" quoth the other, "what is that you say? Do not you know that we have promised our virginity to God?" "Oh! but sister," she replied, "how many things do we promise every day, which we never perform? If we have promised, there will be others found that shall be more punctual."—"But, if we should be with child, what would become of us then?"—"You think of the worst before it happens: it will be time enough to talk of that when it comes: there are a thousand ways of managing in such a case, that nobody will ever be the wiser unless we ourselves make the discovery."—"Well, then," said the second nun, who was even more curious than her friend to know what sort of an animal a man might be; "how shall we contrive this matter?"—"You see," replied the other, "it is about midday, and I believe our sisters are all asleep; let us look round the garden, and if nobody be in it, what have we to do, but

for one of us to lead him into yonder arbor, whilst the other keeps watch. He is such a fool that we can do what we like with him."

Masetto heard all this, and was quite ready to gratify the ladies, but waited until one of them should come and rouse him from his pretended sleep. The two nuns having assured themselves that nobody could see them, she who had been the first to move in the affair went and shook the gardener. He got up; the nun playfully took him by the hand, and led him, grinning and laughing like an idiot, to the arbor, where without giving her much trouble to explain her wishes he did what she wanted. Her curiosity having been satisfied, she made way for her companion, to whom Masetto, fool as he seemed, behaved equally well. Before they left him, each of them repeated the experiment once more, and they agreed in declaring that the result surpassed all that they could have imagined. After this it may easily be guessed how frequent were their visits to the arbor, and how punctually they availed themselves of the fitting hours to take their diversion with the good natured mute.

It chanced, however, one day that their proceedings were observed by one of the sisterhood, who immediately brought two others to witness them. At first the trio were for informing the Lady Abbess, but afterward they changed their minds, entered into an arrangement with the detected pair, and became jointly interested with them in Masetto's services. There now remained but three nuns who were not privy to the secret; but in course of time they too came in various ways to share in it with the rest.

Finally the Abbess, who as yet had no notion of these doings, was taking a walk all alone in the garden one very sultry day, and found Masetto stripped to his shirt and asleep on the broad of his back, under an almond

tree, having, it seems, not much to do that day, because he had been hard at work all the night before. Just then the wind fluttered the loose end of his single garment, and the Abbess saw what immediately gave her a fit of the complaint then prevalent in the convent. Waking up Masetto she took him to her chamber, where she kept him close for some days, to the great mortification of the nuns, who complained loudly that the gardener did not come to his daily labor. She let him go at last, but often had him back again, and altogether engrossed more than her fair share of his attendance. Masetto began to find it no easy task to please so many mistresses, and was strongly of the opinion that things would come to a bad pass with him if he continued dumb much longer. One night then, when he was with the Abbess, his tongue was suddenly untied, and said he, "I have often heard say, madam, that one cock can do very well for ten hens, but that ten men can hardly with their best endeavors satisfy one woman, whereas I have to serve nine. I can't stand it any longer. I'm fairly worn out with what I have done already; so please either to let me go my way in God's name, or put this matter to rights somehow."

The Abbess was astounded to hear him speak. "Why, how is this?" she said, "I thought you were dumb."—"So I was, madam, but not by nature. I had a long disorder which deprived me of my speech; and it was only this very night, thanks be to God, that I felt it come back to me." The Abbess believed this tale, or feigned to do so, and asked him what he meant by saying that he had nine women to satisfy. Masetto explained the whole case to her; and she like a discreet abbess, instead of sending him away, resolved to come to an understanding with her nuns, and devise with them how they might keep such a good gardener without incurring any scandal. A full and unreserved explanation soon

took place between all parties, and the old steward happening to die very opportunely, Masetto was, with his own consent, unanimously chosen to fill the vacant place, and his duties were so apportioned that he could discharge them without inordinate fatigue. At the same time the people of the neighborhood were made to believe that through the prayers of the sisterhood, and through the merits of the saint to whom the convent was dedicated, the man who had been so long dumb had recovered his speech. Under the new steward's management the convent became a little nursery for the propagation of the monastic order, but everything was so quietly done that there never was any talk about it until after the death of the Abbess, when Masetto, being now in years and wealthy, was desirous of returning home.

His desire was readily complied with: and thus, taking no care for his children, but bequeathing them to the place where they were bred and born, he returned a wealthy man to his native place, which he had quitted with nothing but an ax over his shoulder, having had the wit to employ the season of his youth to good purpose.

[Boccaccio took this story from the 'Cento Novelle Antiche,' but substituted an abbess and her nuns for a countess and her *camerarie*. He in his turn has been followed, with some slight modifications, by La Fontaine, in his 'Mazet de Lamporechio.']

ARGUMENT

Alibech, a young convert to Christianity, goes into the desert of the Thebaid, where Rustico, a pious hermit, teaches her how to put the devil in hell.

IN the city of Capsa in Barbary there was aforetime a very rich man, who, among his other children, had a fair

and winsome young daughter, by name Alibech. She, not being a Christian and hearing many Christians who abode in the town mightily extol the Christian faith and the service of God, one day questioned one of them in what manner one might avail to serve God with the least hindrance. The other answered that they best served God who most strictly eschewed the things of the world, as those did who had betaken them into the solitudes of the deserts of Thebaid. The girl, who was maybe fourteen years old and very simple, moved by no ordered desire, but by some childish fancy, set off next morning by stealth and all alone, to go to the desert of Thebaid, without letting any know her intent. After some days, her desire persisting, she won, with no little toil, to the deserts in question and seeing a hut afar off, went thither and found at the door a holy man, who marvelled to see her there and asked her what she sought. She replied that, being inspired of God, she went seeking to enter into His service and was now in quest of one who should teach her how it behoved to serve Him.

The worthy man, seeing her young and very fair and fearing lest, an he entertained her, the devil should beguile him, commended her pious intent and giving her somewhat to eat of roots of herbs and wild apples and dates and to drink of water, said to her, "Daughter mine, not far hence is a holy man, who is a much better master than I of that which thou goest seeking; do thou betake thyself to him;" and put her in the way. However, when she reached the man in question, she had of him the same answer and faring farther, came to the cell of a young hermit, a very devout and good man, whose name was Rustico and to whom she made the same request as she had done to the others. He, having a mind to make a trial of his own constancy, sent her not away, as the others had done. but received her into his cell, and the night being come, he made her a little bed of

palmfronds and bade her lie down to rest thereon. This done, temptations tarried not to give battle to his powers of resistance and he, finding himself grossly deceived by these latter, turned tail, without awaiting many assaults, and confessed himself beaten; then, laying aside devout thoughts and orisons and mortifications, he fell to revolving in his memory the youth and beauty of the damsel and bethinking himself what course he should take with her, so as to win to that which he desired of her, without her taking him for a debauched fellow.

Accordingly having sounded her with sundry questions, he found that she had never known man and was in truth as simple as she seemed; wherefore he bethought him how, under color of the service of God, he might bring her to his pleasures. In the first place, he showed her with many words how great an enemy the devil was of God the Lord, and after gave her to understand that the most acceptable service that could be rendered to God was to put back the devil into hell, whereto He had condemned him. The girl asked him how this might be done; and he, 'Thou shalt soon know that; do thou but as thou shalt see me do.' So saying, he proceeded to put off the few garments he had and abode stark naked, as likewise did the girl, whereupon he fell on his knees, as he would pray, and caused her abide over against himself.

Matters standing thus and Rustico being more than ever inflamed in his desires to see her so fair, there came the resurrection of the flesh, which Alibech observing and marveling, "Rustico," quoth she, "what is that I see on thee which thrusteth forth thus and which I have not?" "Faith, daughter mine," answered he, "this is the devil whereof I bespoke thee; and see now, he giveth me such sore annoy that I can scarce put up with it." Then said the girl, "Now praised be God! I see I fare better than thou, in that I have none of yonder devil."

"True," rejoined Rustico; "but thou hast otherwhat that I have not, and thou hast it instead of this." "What is that?" asked Alibech; and he, "Thou hast hell, and I tell thee methinketh God hath sent thee hither for my soul's health, for that, whenas this devil doth me this annoy an it please thee have so much compassion on me as to suffer me put him back into hell, thou wilt give me the utmost solacement and wilt do God a very great pleasure and service, so indeed thou be come into these parts to do as thou sayest."

The girl answered in good faith, "Marry, father mine, since I have hell, be it whensoever it pleaseth thee;" whereupon quoth Rustico, "Daughter, blessed be thou; let us go then and put him back there, so he may after leave me in peace." So saying, he laid her on one of their little beds and taught her how she should do to imprison that accursed one of God. The girl, who had never yet put any devil in hell, for the first time felt some little pain; wherefore she said to Rustico, "Certes, father mine, this same devil must be an ill thing and an enemy in very deed of God, for that it irketh hell itself, let be otherwhat, when he is put back therein." "Daughter," answered Rustico, "it will not always happen thus;" and to the end that this should not happen, six times, or ever they stirred from the bed, they put him in hell again, insomuch that for the nonce they so took the conceit out of his head that he willingly abode at peace. But, it returning to him again and again the ensuing days and the obedient girl still lending herself to take it out of him, it befell that the sport began to please her and she said to Rustico, "I see now that those good people in Capsa spoke sooth, when they avouched that it was so sweet a thing to serve God; for, certes, I remember me not to have ever done aught that afforded me such pleasance and delight as putting the devil in hell; wherefore methinketh that whoso applieth himself

unto aught other than God His service is a fool and knoweth not his own advantage."

Accordingly, she came oftentimes to Rustico and said to him, "Father mine, I came here to serve God and not to abide idle; let us go put the devil in hell." Which doing, she said whiles, "Rustico, I know not why the devil fleeth away from hell; for, an he abode there as willingly as hell receiveth him and holdeth him, he would never come forth therefrom." The girl, then, on this wise often inviting Rustico and exhorting him to the service of God, so took the bombast out of his doublet that he felt cold what time another had sweated; wherefore he fell to telling her that the devil was not to be chastised nor put into hell, save whenas he should lift up his head for pride; "and we," added he, "by God's grace, have so baffled him that he prayeth our Lord to suffer him abide in peace;" and on this wise he for awhile imposed silence on her. However, when she saw that he required her not of putting the devil into hell, she said to him one day, "Rustico, an thy devil be chastened and give thee no more annoy, my hell letteth me not be; wherefore thou wilt do well to aid me with thy devil in abating the raging of my hell, even as with my hell I have helped thee take the conceit out of thy devil."

Rustico, who lived on roots and water, could ill avail to answer her calls and told her that it would need overmany devils to appease hell, but he would do what he might thereof. Accordingly he satisfied her bytimes, but so seldom it was but casting a bean into the lion's mouth; whereat the girl, herseeming she served not God as diligently as she would fain have done, murmured somewhat. But, whilst this debate was toward between Rustico his devil and Alibech her hell, for overmuch desire on the one part and the lack of power on the other, it befell that a fire broke out in Capsa and burnt Ali-

bech's father in his own house, with as many children and other family as he had; by reason whereof she abode heir to all his good. Thereupon, a young man called Neerbale, who had spent all his substance in gallantry, hearing that she was alive, set out in search of her and finding her, before the court had laid hands upon her father's estate as that of a man dying without heir, to Rustico's great satisfaction, but against her own will, brought her back to Capsa, where he took her to wife and succeeded, in her right, to the ample inheritance of her father.

There, being asked by the women at what she served God in the desert, she answered (Neerbale having not yet lain with her) that she served Him at putting the devil in hell and that Neerbale had done a grievous sin in that he had taken her from such service. The ladies asked, "How putteth one the devil in hell?" And the girl, what with words and what with gestures, expounded it to them; whereat they set up so great a laughing that they laugh yet and said, "Give yourself no concern, my child; nay, for that is done here also and Neerbale will serve our Lord full well with thee at this." Thereafter, telling it from one to another throughout the city, they brought it to a common saying there that the most acceptable service one could render to God was to put the devil in hell, which byword, having passed the sea hither, is yet current here. Wherefore do all you young ladies, who desire to have the grace of God, learn to put the devil in hell, because it is very acceptable to God, highly agreeable to both parties concerned, and much good may grow out of it and follow it.

[This is the 'Diable d'Enfer' of La Fontaine.]

ARGUMENT

Friar Albert makes a woman believe that an angel is in love with her, and in that shape deceives her. Afterwards, for fear of her relations, he throws himself out of the window, and takes shelter in a poor man's house, who exposes him the next day in the public market-place, in the form of a wild man, when he is discovered by two friars, and put into prison.

THERE lived at Imola a man of a very bad life, called Berto della Massa, whose evil deeds had gained him such a character there, that nobody could believe him even when he spoke the truth. Finding, therefore, that all his quirks and cunning would stand him in no further stead at Imola, he removed, in a kind of despair, to Venice, the common receptacle of every sort of wickedness, and resolved to manage matters in a quite different manner from what he had done: and, as if he felt some remorse of conscience for his past life, pretending also to be seized with uncommon zeal and devotion, he turned friar, calling himself Father Albert of Imola. In this habit he seemed to lead a mighty sanctified life, highly commending penance and abstinence, and eating no flesh and drinking no wine; but then it was when he could get neither to please him. Besides this, when he was officiating at the altar at any time, if he saw he was taken notice of by many people, he would be sure to weep over our Saviour's passion, having tears enough at command whenever he chose. In short, what with his preaching and crying together, he had so far insinuated himself into the good graces of the people of Venice, that there was scarcely a will made but he was left executor; he had the care also and disposal of many people's money; and was adviser and confessor to the greatest part both of the men and women; so that from a wolf he became the shepherd,

and the fame of his sanctity was greater than ever was that of St. Francis.

Now it happened, that a vain simple lady, named Lisetta da Ca Quirino, wife to a merchant, who was gone a voyage to Flanders, came one day, with some other women, to confess to this holy friar: and being asked, as she was confessing, if she had a lover? she replied, putting on an angry countenance, "What! father, have you no eyes in your head? Where do you see a woman so handsome as myself? I could have lovers enough; but my beauty is designed for none of them; it is fit only to appear in heaven itself." And many more things she said of the same sort, enough to give any one a surfeit to hear them. Father Albert immediately saw her blind side and thought her fit game for his net, but deferred using any flattering speeches till a more convenient opportunity: to show himself, however, holy, for that time, he began to reprove her, telling her all this was vain-glory, and so forth. The lady, in return, called him a brute, and told him he could not distinguish beauty when he saw it. He then, not to provoke her too far, took her confession, and dismissed her.

A little time after, taking a friend with him whom he could trust to the house, he went with her to one side of the hall, where nobody could see them, and falling down upon his knees, said, "Madam, I must beg, for Heaven's sake, that you will forgive me for blaspheming your beauty, as I did last Sunday; since I was so chastised the following night for it, that I could not rise out of my bed before to-day."—"And who," quoth the foolish lady, "chastised you in that manner?"—"I will tell you. As I was saying my prayers that night, as usual, suddenly a great light shone around me. I turned about to see what it was, and beheld a beautiful youth, with a staff in his hand, who took hold of my hood, threw me down upon the floor, and beat me in

such a manner, that I was almost killed. Upon my asking what all that was for? he made answer, 'Because thou didst so saucily presume to reprove the celestial beauty of Madam Lisetta, whom I love above all things in the world,'—'And who are you?' I demanded. 'I am the angel Gabriel,' he replied. 'O, my Lord,' then said I, 'I beseech you to forgive me.' He answered, 'I do forgive thee, upon condition that thou goest the very first opportunity to her, and obtain her pardon: and unless she thinks fit to excuse thee, I shall return, and give thee such discipline as thou shalt feel as long as thou shalt live.' What he said more I dare not speak, unless I have your forgiveness."

My lady windbag, who had something of a sweet tooth in her head, gave ear to this ridiculous story, and said, "I told you, Father Albert, that my beauties were of the celestial kind; I am sorry for what you have suffered, and forgive you, if you will tell me truly what the angel said besides."—"That I will," said he; "but one thing I must enjoin you, namely, that you tell it to no person living, unless you have a mind to ruin all; for you are certainly the happiest woman upon the face of the earth. This angel Gabriel told me, then, that he had such a regard for you, that he should frequently have come to pass the night with you, if he thought you would not be too much terrified. He bid me tell you, therefore, that he should come some night, and stay a while with you; and seeing that he is an angel, and that you could not touch him if he were to come in that shape, he will put on a human appearance for your sake, and would know from you when you would choose to see him, and whose form and person you would have him assume." The conceited woman said she was very happy to hear that the angel Gabriel loved her, for indeed she loved him, and never failed to set up a full candle wherever she saw him painted. At any hour he

might please to come he should be welcome, and would find her alone in her chamber: but on this condition, that he should not forsake her for the Virgin Mary, of whom it was said he was very fond; and, indeed, so it appeared, for he was everywhere to be seen on his knees before her. Furthermore, he might come in any form he pleased, provided that he did not frighten her. "Madam," said the friar, "you talk very sensibly, and I will arrange with him as you desire; but I have a great favor to beg, which will cost you nothing; it is that he may put on my person. I will tell you why I ask this. It is because he will take my soul out of my body and put it in paradise, and will enter into me; and as long as he is with you, so long will my soul be in paradise." "I consent with all my heart," answered she; "it will be some amends for the blows you have received."—"But," said he, "the door must be open, otherwise, as he comes in human shape, he would not be able to enter your house." She promised it should be done. Friar Albert then took leave of her, and she remained in such a transcendent state of exaltation, that she did not know which way her sitting parts hung, and thought every moment a year till the angel Gabriel should come to her.

By way of preparation for the part he had to play that night, Friar Albert fortified himself with provocatives and lots of good things; and, when it was dark, he went with a companion to the house of a woman, who used to accommodate him when he had such affairs on hand. Having there put on his angelic accoutrements, he went to the lady's house, found the door on the latch, and stepped up into her chamber. When Lisetta beheld that shining white apparition, she knelt down before it; the angel gave her his benediction, raised her from the ground, and made a sign to her to go to bed. She obeyed with cheerful alacrity, and the angel lay down beside his votary. Friar Albert was a

fine lively fellow; Lisetta was a dainty bit of flesh; and he soon let her know the difference between an angelic bedfellow and her husband. Many a flight he took that night without wings; the lady fairly screamed with delight; and between whiles he told her many things of the glories of heaven. Just before daybreak he went away as he had come, after making arrangements for his return, and rejoined his comrade, whom the good woman had kindly taken into her own bed lest he should be frightened if he lay alone.

As soon as Lisetta had dined, she set off with her companion to see Friar Albert, and told him all about the angel Gabriel, what she had heard from him about the glories of heaven, how he was made, and a thousand marvelous stories of her own invention. "I don't know, madam," replied the friar, "how you fared with him; but well I know that after he came to me last night, and I gave him your message, he suddenly transported my soul into a place of such exquisite pleasure as never was known, where it remained till this morning; as for my body I know not what became of it."—"Don't I tell you!" said Lisetta; "your body lay all night in my arms with the angel Gabriel; and if you will not believe me, look under your left breast where I gave the angel—oh! such a kiss, that you'll bear the marks of it for some days to come."—"Well," said the friar, "I will do what I have not done for a long time past, that is, strip myself and see if what you say is true." After much more talk of this kind, Madam Lisetta went home; and the angelic Franciscan continued his visits to her for a long time without impediment; but at last her silly babble spoiled all.

One day it chanced that, being with an acquaintance, the conversation turned on female beauty, and Lisetta to exalt herself above all others, must needs say, "If you but knew what a conquest I have made, you would

say no more about other women." Her friend, who was eager to draw her out, replied, "That may be very true; and yet anybody but myself might hesitate to believe it, not knowing who is the person in question."—"I ought not to name him," said the vain creature, "but as I have no secrets from you, I will tell you that it is the angel Gabriel; and he loves me better than himself, as the finest woman to be found, so he tells me, in the whole world or within the lagoons." The friend could hardly help laughing out, but refrained that she might hear more. "By my faith, my dear," she said, "if the angel Gabriel is your lover, and told you this, of course he knows best; but I had no idea that angels did such things."—"You were mistaken, my dear, I give you my word my husband's but a fool to him; and he tells me that they make love in heaven just the same as here, but he fell in love with me because there is none equal to me up there; nay, he comes down very often to be with me; what do you say to that?"

It seemed an age to the friend till she could get away from Lisetta and have her fill of laughter. In the evening she had a bevy of ladies at an entertainment, and told them the whole story. They, again, told it to their husbands and to other ladies, and these to more, so that in less than two days it was known all over Venice. Lisetta's brothers-in-law heard of it amongst the rest, and without saying a word to her on the subject, they kept watch for several nights together to discover this angel and see if he could fly. Some inkling of the matter also reached the ears of Friar Albert, and one night he went to reprimand her for making it public, but had no sooner got into the apartment, and stripped himself, than he heard the brothers-in-law at the door. Jumping up at once, and seeing no other way to escape, he opened the casement that was over the great canal, and threw himself directly into it. As the water was deep,

and he was a good swimmer, he received no harm: and espying a house on the other side, with the door open, he rushed into it, and entreated the honest man to save his life, telling him a thousand lies concerning the reason of his coming there in that manner, and at that time. The man, being moved with pity, and having some business which called him away for a time, desired him to go into his bed, and lie there till he should return; he then locked him up in the house, and went about his business. The brothers-in-law, upon coming into the lady's chamber, found that the angel Gabriel had left his wings there, and flown away without them. They gave her, therefore, a tremendous rating, and left her disconsolate, carrying off the angel's implements along with them.

In the mean time, the sun having risen, the man had repaired to the Rialto, where he heard the whole story how the angel Gabriel had been to spend the night with Madonna Lisetta, and how he was discovered by her relations, and forced to leap into the canal, and nobody knew what was become of him; whence the cottager concluded it must be the same man that he had safe and fast at home. Finding, upon his return, that this was the fact, after some discourse together he made the friar send home for five hundred ducats, threatening otherwise to deliver him up to the woman's friends. When the money was brought, and the friar was desirous of getting away, the honest man said to him, "I see no way for your escape but one. To-day we make a great rejoicing, when one person is to bring a man clothed like a bear, another like a wild man, and so on; and in that manner people are to come under different disguises into St. Mark's Place, as to a hunt; and when the diversion is over, every man leads away the person that he brings, to what quarter he pleases. Now, if, before any one knows that you are here, you will consent to be led in one of these disguises, I will carry you afterwards

where you will; otherwise I do not see how you can get away without being observed; for the relations, guessing that you are somewhere hereabouts, are everywhere upon the scout for you." This seemed a hard sentence to the friar; but his fear of being discovered was so great, that he at last consented. Accordingly he was besmeared all over with honey, and covered with feathers; a chain was put about his neck, and a mask upon his face, with a great stick in one hand, and a couple of butcher's mastiffs in the other; and a man was privily sent before to the Rialto, to make public proclamation, that all who had a mind to see the angel so much talked of, might repair to St. Mark's Place: which was a Venetian trick at best.

When that was done, Father Albert was led forth, and all the way as he was carried along, there was a great outcry of the people, wondering what thing it was: and being brought into the great square, what with the people that followed, and those that flocked thither, upon hearing the proclamation, the crowd was immensely great. The fellow then tied his wild man to a pillar pretending to wait till the sport began; in the meantime, as he was bedaubed with honey, the flies and wasps began to grow exceedingly troublesome to him. Perceiving, at last, the square sufficiently crowded, under a pretense of turning his wild man loose, the man took off the mask, and said, "Gentlemen, as I find we are to have no other sport to-day, I intend to show you the angel who comes down from heaven o' nights to comfort the Venetian ladies." No sooner was the mask removed, than all present recognized Father Albert, and there was a most terrible outcry against him, every one pelting him with whatever filth came to their hands, till at length the news reached the convent, when two of his brethren came, and, throwing a gown over him, carried him away with the utmost difficulty to their monastery, where he was

thrown into prison, and ended his days in a miserable manner. Thus did this man's hypocrisy and wickedness meet with their due reward; and may the like fate attend all his kind.

[The numerous tales founded on that species of seduction practised by Alberto da Imola, may have originated in the incident related in all the romances concerning Alexander the Great, where Nectanebus predicts to Olympias that she is destined to have a son by Ammon, and afterward enjoys the queen under the appearance of that divinity. But they have more probably been derived from the story related by Josephus (lib. xviii, c. xiii), of Mundus, a Roman knight in the reign of Tiberius, who having fallen in love with Paulina, wife of Saturninus, bribed a priestess of Isis, to whose worship Paulina was addicted, to inform her that the god Anabis, being enamored of her charms, had desired her to come to him. In the evening she accordingly proceeded to the temple, where she was met by Mundus, who personated the Egyptian divinity. Next morning she boasted of her interview with Anabis to all her acquaintance, who suspected some trick of priestcraft; and the deceit having come to the knowledge of Tiberius, he ordered the temple of Isis to be demolished, and her priests to be crucified. Similar deceptions are also common in Eastern stories. Thus, in the History of Malek, in the 'Persian Tales,' the adventurer of that name, under the semblance of Mahomet, seduces the Princess of Gazna. A fraud of the nature of that employed by Alberto da Imola is frequent in the French novels and romances, as in 'L'Amant Salamandre,' and the 'Sylph Husband,' of Marmontel. It is also said to have been oftener than once practised in France, in real life, as appears from the well-known case of Father Girard and Mlle. Cadière.]

ARGUMENT

Ricciardo Manardi is found by Lizio along with his daughter, whom he marries, and they become reconciled.

NOT long since there lived in Romagna a worthy and accomplished knight, named Lizio da Valbona, who had, in his old age, by his lady, Madam Giacomina, a daugh-

ter, the most beautiful young lady in all the country. Being their only child, they were extremely tender and careful of her, thinking through her to make some grand alliance. Now there was a young gentleman, of a very agreeable person, one of the Manardi, of Brettinoro, Ricciardo by name, who used to come much to their house. Lizio and his lady were under no further apprehensions from him than they would have been from their own son; but often seeing their daughter, and being charmed with her person and behavior, he fell secretly in love, which she perceiving, soon delighted him exceedingly, by returning his affection. He was often desirous of speaking to her, yet could never dare to do it; till, at length, he had one day opportunity, and enough courage, to say, "Pray, Caterina, let me not die for love." She instantly replied, "Would to Heaven you would show me the like mercy!" Overjoyed by this encouragement, he rejoined, "I shall study your will and pleasure in everything; do you find a way to make us happy together." "You see, Ricciardo, how I am watched," she answered, "and, therefore, I am unable to contrive the means for your coming to me; but if you can think of any method to do it, without bringing disgrace upon me, tell me, and I shall be very glad." After mature consideration, "My dearest Caterina," he said, "I see no other way, but for you to get leave to sleep in the gallery, which looks toward the garden, and if I knew when that happened, I would certainly contrive to get to you, however great the height from the ground." "If you have the courage to come," she replied, "I think I can manage so as to sleep there." He promised to do so, and for the present they parted.

The following day, it being about the end of May, Caterina complained grievously to her mother, that the heat had been so excessive the night before, that she could not get a wink of sleep. "Why, daughter," said

the mother, "you talk of heat, I do not find the weather so sultry."—"Madam, there is some difference between old people and young."—"That may be; but can I change the seasons? You must bear with the time of year as it is: another night it may be more temperate, and then you will sleep better."—"I wish it might," said Caterina, "but the nights are not used to grow cooler, the more the summer advances."—"Then," said the mother, "what would you have me do for you?" She replied, "If you and my father please, I would gladly lie in the gallery adjoining your room, which looks toward the garden; there I shall have plenty of fresh air, and hear the nightingale, and it will be much more pleasant than lying in your chamber."—"Well, my dear," said the old lady, "I will speak to your father about it, and we will do as he thinks best." Accordingly she mentioned the matter to Lizio, who being old, was apt to be a little testy, and he said, "What nightingale is this she talks of? I shall make her sleep to the singing of a cricket." Caterina hearing this, kept awake the next night, more through vexation than heat, and was not only restless herself, but kept her mother also from sleeping. The next morning the old lady complained to her husband, saying, "You show very little regard for your daughter; what does her lying in the gallery signify to you? She did not rest at all last night for the heat. And as to her fancy about the nightingale, she is young, let her have her way." "Then make her a bed there," he replied, "if you will, and let her hear the nightingale." A bed, therefore, was ordered to be set up for her, which she gave Ricciardo to understand, by a concerted signal, and he at once knew what part he had to act. When she was gone to bed, Lizio locked the door that opened out of his chamber into the gallery, and then went to rest himself.

As soon as everything was still, Ricciardo got upon

the wall, by help of a scaling ladder; then laying hold of the joinings of another wall, he climbed at last (not without great difficulty, as well as danger had he fallen) to the gallery, where the lady had long been expecting him, and welcomed him with the greatest delight imaginable. They passed a delicious night, and the nightingale sang ever so many times. Heated at last by the weather and their sport, they fell asleep without any covering over them, Caterina having her right arm under her lover's neck, and holding in her left hand what modesty forbids me to name before ladies. The night being short, and further spent than they supposed, they lay fast asleep in that way till daylight, when Messer Lizio got out of bed. As soon as he rose, he began to think of his daughter, and, opening the door softly, he said, "Let us see how the nightingale has made Caterina sleep." Going then into the gallery, and drawing the curtains, he found Ricciardo and her asleep together: upon this he stepped back, and woke up his wife, saying, "Up with you! Make haste! Come and see how fond your daughter is of the nightingale. She has caught it and has it fast in her hand, I tell you." Dressing herself as fast as she could, she followed her husband, and seeing the pair together in that manner, was going to give Ricciardo all the hard words she could think of; but Lizio said, "Hush! not a word, I charge you; make no noise about it; as he has now got her, he shall keep her: he is of a good family, as well as rich, so we cannot have a better son-in-law. If he means to go off in a whole skin, he shall marry her before I part with him; and so he'll find he has put the nightingale in his own cage, and not another's." The wife on this was a little comforted, and the more so as she saw that her daughter had passed a pleasant night, slept very sound, and had caught the nightingale; so she held her peace.

Soon after this debate, Ricciardo chanced to wake, and seeing it broad daylight, was frightened out of his wits, and waking Caterina, he said, "Alas! my life, what shall we do? the daylight has surprised me here with you?" At these words Lizio stepped from behind the curtain, and said, "We shall do well enough." Ricciardo's heart was in his mouth at seeing him, and sitting up in bed, he said, "For Heaven's sake, sir, forgive me; I confess that I deserve to die; therefore, you may do with me as you please: yet, if it be possible, I pray you to spare my life." Lizio replied, "Ricciardo, my friendship for you did not deserve such a return as I have met with: but since it is so, you have only one way whereby you may save your life and my honor, that is to marry her; either do that, or else make your peace with Heaven, for here you shall die." Meanwhile, Caterina let go the nightingale, and, covering herself up, began to cry and sob beseeching her father to forgive Ricciardo, and Ricciardo to do what her father required. There was no need of many words: the fear of death, as well as his love for Caterina, soon made Ricciardo come to a decision, and he told Lizio that he was ready to comply. Lizio then took his wife's ring, and caused him instantly to espouse Caterina, which being done, he desired the new married couple to take their own time for rising, as they probably had need of repose. The nightingale had sung six times in the night, but they had two more ditties before they got up. That morning Lizio and his son-in-law had some further discourse together, and everything being settled to the satisfaction of all parties, the marriage was some days afterwards celebrated in the most public manner with great demonstrations of joy. Ricciardo took his wife home, and they lived together, from that time, in all

peace and comfort, and went nightingale-catching by day and by night as often as they had a mind.

[The characters in this tale are mentioned by Dante, in his 'Purgatory.' A spirit, complaining of the degeneracy of the Italians, exclaims:

"Ov'è 'l buon Lizio e Arrego Manardi!"—c. 14.

This demonstrates the existence of these persons, whence Manni in his 'Commentary' infers, according to his usual process of reasoning that the incident related by Boccaccio must have actually occurred. In fact, however, it is derived from one of the ancient Armorican tales of Marie, entitled 'Lai de Lauistri,' which, in the Breton language, signified nightingale. The only modern imitation of this tale is, 'Le Rossignol,' usually published in the Contes et Nouvelles of La Fontaine, but of which there is some reason to believe he was not the author.]

ARGUMENT

A jealous man confesses his wife under a priest's habit, who tells him that she is visited every night by a friar; and, whilst he is watching the door, she lets her lover in at the house-top.

THERE lived in Arimino a certain rich merchant, who had an agreeable woman for his wife, of whom he was immoderately jealous, and for no other reason in the world, but that as he was very fond of her himself, and knew that it was her whole study to please him; so he imagined every one else would like her as well, and that she would be as desirous to oblige them; which showed him to be one of a wicked disposition, as well as of little understanding. He consequently kept so strict an eye over her always, that no felon under sentence of death could be more narrowly watched. So far from going out to feasts at any time, or to church, or out of doors, under any pretense whatever, she was not suffered to look out of the window; so that she led

a most wretched life, and so much the worse, as she knew herself to be innocent.

Thus, finding herself so wrongfully treated, she resolved, for the time to come, to give him some reason for such usage. And as she had no opportunity of seeing people in the street, and knew that there was an agreeable young man living in the next house, she looked about to see if there was any chink in the wall, through which she might have an opportunity of speaking to him, to make him an offer of her love, and to have him come to her sometimes, if such a thing could be contrived, in order to spend her life with a little more comfort, till her husband should be cured of his jealousy. At last, in a corner of the room, she espied a crack which looked into a chamber of the next house, and she said to herself, "Now if this should prove to be Filippo's chamber" (for that was the young gentleman's name), "my scheme would be half accomplished." She set her maid to work to ascertain the truth upon this point, and soon learned that the young man did sleep there all alone. She now made it her business to visit that place pretty often, and put little sticks and straws through into her neighbor's chamber, which he soon perceiving, came to the wall to see what it meant. Then she called to him softly; he knew her voice and answered; a few words sufficed to make her mind known to him, which being quite to his satisfaction, he contrived to enlarge the opening on his own side, taking care all the time that nobody should perceive it. From that time they had frequent conferences together, and could touch each other's hands, but no more, because of the husband's extraordinary care and jealousy.

Now Christmas-day drawing near, the lady said to her husband, that, with his leave, she would go to church that day, to confess and receive the sacrament, like other good Christians. "And pray what sins can

you have committed," he replied, "that you should want to confess?"—"What!" quoth she, "do you take me for a saint? Though you keep me shut up in this manner, yet I must sin as well as other people; but I am not going to tell them to you, as you are no priest." These words occasioned such a strong suspicion in him, that he was resolved to know what those sins were; and having determined what means to use, he told her that he was willing; but that she should go only to their chapel, and that betimes in the morning, and confess to their chaplain, or some person that he should appoint, and to no other, and return home directly. The lady seemed partly to know his design, and without making any other reply, said she would do as he desired. On Christmas-day, then, she rose betimes in the morning, and went to the chapel, as her husband had directed her. He also went to the same place, got there first, and having agreed with the priest what to do, he put on a gown, with a great hood that almost covered his face, such as we see priests wear sometimes, and drawing it over his eyes, sat himself down in the choir. The lady, upon coming into the chapel, inquired for the priest; who, hearing from her that she wanted to confess, told her, that he could not stay to hear himself, but would send one of his brethren. Accordingly he sent the jealous husband, in an ill hour for him, as it happened, who had not so well disguised himself, but she immediately knew him, and said to herself, "Thank Heaven, from a jealous fool he has become a priest: but I will take care to give him what he seeks for."

Affecting then not to know him, she sat down at his feet. The jealous gentleman had put some little stones into his mouth, to alter his voice, thinking himself well enough disguised as to everything else. Coming then to the confession, amongst other things, she told him, that, though married, she was yet in love with a priest,

who came and lay with her every night. When the confessor heard this, he felt as if a knife was stuck into his heart, and were it not for his desire to learn something further, he would have gone away that moment, and left her on her knees. Keeping his seat, then, he said to her, "Well, but how is it? Does not your husband lie with you?"—"Yes, he does, sir," she replied. "Then," continued he, "how can the priest lie with you at the same time?"—"I know not how he does it, but there is not a door in the house but opens upon his touching it; he tells me also, that, upon coming to our chamber, before he opens the door, he says some certain words, which throw my husband asleep, and then he comes in, and lies with me, and the other never knows it."—"Oh, madam," quoth the confessor, "that is a very bad thing; you must leave off such practices entirely."—"Ah, father," answered she, "I know not how to do it, I love him so well."—"Then I can give you no absolution."—"I am sorry for that," she replied; "but I came here to speak the truth: if I could leave off, I would tell you so."—"I am sorry for you, as I see your soul is in a state of damnation; but I will offer up my particular prayers for you, which may be of service, and I will send a person to you at certain times, when you may inform him if you think you have received any benefit, and in that case we will proceed further." The lady replied, "Sir, never think of sending anybody to our house, for my husband is so unreasonably jealous, that all the world could never beat it out of his head but that he came with a bad intent, and I should not have one good day for this twelvemonth."—"Madam," he rejoined, "have no care for that, for I shall manage in such a manner, that you will hear no more from him upon that score."—"If you can do that," said the lady, "I am content." And having made an end of her con-

fession, and had her penance assigned her, she got up and went to mass.

The husband, ready to burst with fury, put off the priest's habit, and went home, waiting to find the priest and his wife together, in order to wreak his vengeance upon both; whilst she went out of the church, seeing plainly by his looks that she had given him but a bad Christmas-box, though he endeavored to conceal both what he had done and meant further to do. Resolving then to wait the next night at the door for the priest, he said, "I shall go out to sup and stay all night; be sure, therefore, you lock the street door, and that upon the stairs, as also your chamber door, and when you are disposed you may go to bed." She wished him a good night, went immediately to the chink in the chamber, and made the usual sign, when Filippo came to her, and she told him what she had done that morning, and what her husband had said afterwards, adding, "I am confident he will never stir from the door all night long; do you contrive a way, then, to come in at the top of the house." He replied, full of joy, "Depend upon it, Madam, I will." When night came, therefore, the jealous husband armed himself privately, and lay concealed in the ground-room, whilst his wife made the doors fast, especially that upon the stairs, so that he could not come up to her: and the young man, when he thought it proper time, came by a secret way into her chamber, where they enjoyed themselves all night, without fear of interruption. The husband, in the mean time, continued supperless all night long, uneasy to the last degree, and almost starved to death with cold, waiting by the door for the priest. Day appearing at last, and nobody coming, he composed himself there to sleep. Rising at the third hour, and the door of the house being now opened, he came in, pretending to come from another place, and called for his breakfast. Soon after-

ward he sent a messenger to his wife, as from the priest who had confessed her, to know if that person had come to her since. She, who understood full well the nature of the message, replied, "No, he did not come that night, and if he left off visiting her, she might forget him, although she had no desire to do so."

What more need I say to you? The husband continued to watch every night, and the wife and her gallant were together all the time. At last, being out of all manner of patience, he demanded of her, with the utmost wrath in his looks, what it was that she had confessed to the priest? But she refused to tell him, saying that it was neither just nor reasonable. "Vile woman!" he cried, "I know in spite of you, what it was, and will make you confess who this priest is, that lies with you every night, by virtue of his enchantments, or else I will cut your throat." She replied, "It is false; I never lay with any priest."—"What!" said he, "did you not say so and so to the priest who confessed you?"—"Not," she replied, "for him to tell you again; but if you were present, it is a different thing: then, to be plain with you, I did say so."—"Now tell me," quoth he, "who this priest is, and quickly."

She smiled and said, "I am always glad to see a wise man led (by the horns as it were) by a simple woman; though you deserve not that character, since you have suffered yourself to be transported by an unreasonable fit of jealousy, without knowing why; therefore, the more weak you are, the less is my glory. Do you think my eyes are as bad as your understanding? No; I knew very well who the priest was that confessed me, and that was you. But I was resolved to give you what you wanted, and I think I have done so. But if you were as wise as you would be thought, you would never have desired to come at your wife's secrets in that manner, and would have known, without any vain suspicion, that

every word was true which I said, and without the least crime or offense. I told you I loved a priest: were not you, my unworthy husband, then a priest? I said, no door could be kept shut when he had a mind to come to me: and is not that literally true? I added that the priest lay with me every night. And pray when did you lie from me? And when you sent to know if he was with me that night—you know that very time you had not been with me—I answered that he had not been with me. Who but a person blinded with jealousy, like yourself, but must have understood these things? And yet you kept watch all night at the door, and would have made me believe that you were gone elsewhere to sup and spend the night. Consider a little better, and behave like a man, and do not make a fool of yourself any longer, in the eyes of one who is acquainted with all your ways, as I am. Leave off this extraordinary care upon my account; for, I assure you, were I disposed to be what you suspect, had you a hundred eyes, whereas you have only two, I could do it over and over again, and you be never the wiser.”

The poor jealous creature, who had thought himself very cunning before, now saw how he was despised, and, without more words, divested himself of that foolish and troublesome disposition, ever after esteeming his wife a virtuous and prudent woman. And she had no further occasion to make her lover come in at the top of the house, as cats do; for the door was open afterward whenever they had a mind to be together.

[This story is an ingenious improvement upon the Fabliau ‘Du Chevalier qui confessa sa Femme.’ It has been frequently imitated. In the 78th of the ‘Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles,’ entitled ‘Le Mari Confesseur,’ a lady who is confessed by her husband under the disguise of a priest acknowledges a criminal intercourse with a squire, a knight, and a priest. On hearing this, the husband bursts out into an indignant exclamation.

"Were you not," says she, with some presence of mind, "a squire when I married you, were you not afterwards a knight, and are you not now a priest?" This is copied by Lafontaine, in 'Le Mari Confesseur.']

ARGUMENT

Two young gentlemen lie at an inn, one of whom goes to bed to the landlord's daughter; whilst the wife, by mistake, lies with the other. Afterwards, he that had lain with the daughter, gets to bed to the father, and tells him all that had passed, thinking it had been his friend: a great uproar is made about it; upon which the wife goes to bed to the daughter, and very cunningly sets all to rights again.

ON the plains of Mugnone lived, not long ago, an honest man, who kept a small house for the entertainment of travelers, serving them with meat and drink for their money, but seldom lodging any, unless they were his particular acquaintances. He had a wife, a very comely woman, by whom he had two children, the one an infant, the other a fine handsome girl of about fifteen or sixteen years of age, not yet married. She had taken the fancy of a young gentleman of our city, who used to travel much that way, and being proud of such a conquest, she strove to preserve his good opinion, so that their mutual inclinations would several times have been gratified, had not Pinuccio, for that was the young gentleman's name, carefully avoided it, for her credit as well as his own. At last, his love growing every day more fervent, he resolved, in order to gain his point, to lie all night at her father's house; supposing, as he was acquainted with the state of the house, that it might then be effected without any one's privity. He communicated his design to a confidential friend of his, named Adriano; so they hired a couple of horses one evening, and having their portmanteaus be-

hind them, filled perhaps with straw, they set out from Florence; and, after taking a circuit, came, as it grew late, to the plains of Mugnone. There, turning their horses' heads, as if they had come from Romagna, they rode on to this cottage, and knocked at the door, which was immediately opened by the attentive landlord. "Honest landlord," said Pinuccio, "we must beg the favor of a night's lodging, for we designed to have reached Florence, but have so managed that it is now much too late, as you see."—"Sir," replied the host, "you know very well how ill I can accommodate such gentlemen as yourselves; but, as you are come at such an hour, and there is no time for your traveling any farther, I will entertain you as well as I can." So they dismounted, and went into his house, having first taken care of their horses; and as they had provision along with them, they sat down and supped with their host.

Now there was only one little chamber in the house, which had three beds in it; namely, two at one end, and the third at the other, opposite to them, with just room to go between, and no more. The least incommodious of these, the landlord ordered to be sheeted for these two gentlemen, and put them to bed. A little time afterward, neither of them being asleep, though they pretended to be so, he made his daughter lie in one of the beds that remained; he and his wife went into the other, and she set the cradle with the child by her bed-side. Things being so disposed, and Pinuccio having made an exact observation of every particular, as soon as he thought it a proper time, and that every one was asleep, he rose, and went softly to bed to the daughter, where he remained to his great satisfaction. In the mean time, a cat happened to throw something down in the house, which awakened the good woman, who, fearing it was something else, got up in the dark, and went where she had heard the noise. Just then it

chanced that Adriano rose, upon a particular occasion, and finding the cradle in his way, he moved it nearer to his own bed; and having done what he rose for, went to bed again, without troubling himself to put the cradle back in its place. The good woman, finding what was thrown down to be of no moment, never troubled herself to strike a light, to see further about it, but returned to the bed where her husband lay; and not finding the cradle, "Bless me," she said to herself, "I had like to have made a strange mistake, and gone to bed to my guests!" Going farther then, and finding the cradle which stood by Adriano, she stepped into bed to him, thinking it had been her husband. He was awake, and treated her very kindly, without saying a word all the time to undeceive her.

At length Pinuccio, fearing lest he should fall asleep, and so be surprised with his mistress, after having made the best use of his time, left her to return to his own bed; when meeting with the cradle, and supposing that was his host's bed, he went further, and stepped into the host's bed indeed, who immediately awoke. Pinuccio, thinking it was his friend, said to him, "Surely, nothing was ever so sweet as Niccolosa; never man was so blessed as I have been with her all night long." The host, who was anything but pleased with this news, said first to himself, "What the devil is the man doing here?" Afterward, being more passionate than wise, he cried out, "Thou art the greatest of villains to use one in that manner: but I vow to God I will pay thee for it." Pinuccio, who was none of the sharpest men in the world, seeing his mistake, without ever thinking to amend it, as he might have done, replied, "You pay me! what can you do?" The hostess, imagining that she had been with her husband, said to Adriano, "Hark to our guests! what is the matter with them?" He replied, with a laugh, "Let them be hanged, if they will; they got drunk, I

suppose, last night." The woman now distinguished her husband's voice, and hearing Adriano, soon knew where she was, and with whom. Therefore she very discreetly got up, without saying a word, and removed the cradle, though there was no light in the chamber, as near as she could guess to her daughter's bed, and crept in to her; when, seeming as if she had been awake with their noise, she called out to her husband to know what was the matter with him and the gentleman. The husband replied, "Do you not hear what he says he has been doing to-night with Niccolosa?"—"He is a liar," quoth she, "he was never in bed with her, it was I, and I have never closed my eyes since. You are an ass to believe him. You drink to that degree in the evening, that you rave all night long, and go here and there, without knowing anything of the matter, and think you do wonders. It's surprising you don't break your neck. But what is that gentleman doing there? why is he not in his own bed?" Adriano, on the other side, perceiving that the good woman had found a very artful evasion, both for herself and daughter, cried out, "Pinuccio, I have told you a hundred times that you should never lie out of your own house; for that great failing of yours, of walking in your sleep, and telling your dreams for truth, will get you into mischief some time or other. Come back to your own bed, confound you!" The landlord, hearing what his wife and Adriano said, began to think Pinuccio was really dreaming, so he got up and shook him by the shoulders, to rouse him, saying, "Wake up, and get back to your own bed." Pinuccio now began to ramble in his talk, like a man that was dreaming, whereat the host made himself exceedingly merry. At last he seemed to wake, after much ado, and called out, "Hallo! Adriano, is it daylight? what do you wake me for?"—"Yes, yes," said Adriano, "come here, will you?" He, pretending to be very sleepy, got up at

last, and went to Adriano. In the morning, the landlord laughed very heartily, and was full of jokes about him and his dreams. So they passed from one merry subject to another, whilst their horses were getting ready, and their portmanteaus tying upon them; when, taking the host's parting cup, they mounted and went to Florence, no less pleased with the manner of the thing's being effected, than with what followed. Afterward, Pinuccio contrived other means of being with Niccolosa, who still vowed to her mother that he had been dreaming that night; whilst she, well remembering how she had fared with Adriano, thought herself the only person that had been awake.

NINE STORIES FROM IL NOVELLINO

BY

MASUCCIO SALERNITANO

(1420 - 1478)

MASUCCIO SALERNITANO ("the Salernian") was born in Salerno in 1420, and was a man of rank as well as a brilliant and favorite writer. He was for many years attached to the household of the Duke of Milan, but studied the lives of the common people, in order to broaden his mind and increase his ability to portray many phases of life. *Il Novellino* is a collection of fifty stories, published in 1476, ranking second only to Boccaccio's tales for their wit, originality, and dramatic power. Masuccio died in 1478.

ARGUMENT

A Dominican friar persuades Madonna Barbara that she will find herself with child by a certain righteous man, and will in due time bring forth the fifth evangelist. By means of his fraud, she becomes pregnant by him; and then he, under the cover of a fresh deceit, makes good his flight.

THERE is in the mouths of men a story approved by a sufficient show of truth, which tells how, in years only a short time past, there lived in Germany a nobleman of high estate called by name the Duke of Lanzhuetta, a man wealthy in lands, and in precious stones, and in other possessions of this sort beyond any other baron of Germany. To this gentleman fortune had granted the gift of one only daughter, to whom he gave the name of Barbara, and she, as she was the single child of the house, was loved by her father with a deep and single love. In like manner, the extraordinary beauties of her person were celebrated and held in high esteem in all parts of the empire. Now this damsel, while she

was yet of tender age, inspired peradventure by the Holy Spirit, or moved now and again thereto rather by some childish fancy than by any regular desire, promised by a solemn vow on her part that she would keep herself a virgin as long as her life should last, and thus, having dedicated her virginity to Christ and decked herself with all virtues and praiseworthy manners, so that she seemed to the eyes of the world as one overgone in devotion, she came to the marriageable age.

When it was made known to her that divers noble barons were proffering requests with no little importunity to her father to gain her hand in marriage, it seemed to her that of necessity she would be constrained to make known this inclination of hers; wherefore, in a manner entirely befitting the occasion, she informed her father, and her mother as well, of the same, but they both of them could only bring themselves to listen to news of this character with great harshness of demeanor and with much arguing thereanent. And, howbeit they used their wits as best they could, with many threats and with allurements also, to make her draw back from the course she was so obstinately set to follow, they knew well enough how firmly she was bent on treading the path upon which she had entered, and on this account, plunged in sorrow such as they had never before tasted, they determined to bring the matter to a peaceful issue, and to set down such an accident to the charge of nature.

As soon as Barbara had let appear what her inclination really was, and had caused to be set up in her chamber an oratory fashioned in very devout wise, she not only gave herself over to perpetual prayer, but vexed and mortified her delicate body with fastings and discipline after a manner which was a wonder to behold. The fame of so great sanctity soon spread itself abroad in the upper and the lower parts of Germany, and in

these regions of Italy as well, and on account of this report in a very short time an innumerable multitude of religious persons, and of other people likewise, came together round about the city where dwelt the duke aforesaid. These people put forward all manner of excuses to account for their presence, and, in exactly the same way as the vultures and famishing wolves run after decaying carcasses, these human birds and beasts of prey did their best to win as booty both the fame and the fortune of so illustrious and extraordinary a lady.

Now amongst these there came a certain rascally friar, whose name I either do not know or do not wish to make public; indeed, for certain reasons of decency I intend to keep silence as to whether he was an Italian or a German. This man, forsooth, being a brother of the Dominican order, had gained much renown as a skilful preacher, and, using in most arrant wise the arts of a charlatan, he went rambling from place to place in Germany, which is, as you know, a rude and barbarous country, carrying with him the handle of a knife with which Saint Peter Martyr was slain, and other trifles, reputed relics of their San Vincenzo, and making it appear to the crowd of gulls he attracted that he wrought divers wonders with his unbounded and miraculous power.

It chanced that the fame of this man was brought to the notice of Madonna Barbara, a thing which he himself greatly desired to come to pass, having taken due foresight to attain this same end. Whereupon she, being mightily anxious to see him, sent word for him to come to her. The friar, not forgetting to put in practice all his wonted mummery, set out quickly to obey her summons, and, after the lady had given him reception, and honored him as a saint, she made known to him the unchangeable resolution she had adopted, begging him at the same time that he would, of his kind-

ness, give her counsel, and ending with a prayer for his aid toward the salvation of her soul. The friar, who was both young and robust in body, no sooner looked upon the beauty of the lady—which forsooth was more divine than human—than he fell straightway in love with her, and, for the reason that he felt himself now so sharply assailed by lustful desire, it wanted but little more to cause him to fall into a swoon at the very sight of her; nevertheless, having collected his wits, he gave the most admirable commendation to the holy resolution she had formed, praising and blessing continually divine providence for having chosen to take so worthy a virgin out of this guileful world. Moreover, he argued before her parents that a character and disposition so perfect as was that of their daughter had not been created for their benefit alone, but for the profit of all womankind, present and future as well. Likewise he persuaded her, seeing that her intercourse with people of the world might be fraught with danger to his purpose, that she ought to set herself apart from the world in a society of ladies, who should be virgins likewise; putting herself under obedience to some religious order, in such wise as to cause to be formed another choir of virgins upon the earth, who would be ever at the service of Christ Jesus.

Now after he had held much converse with the damsel herself, and with the duke and his wife as well, and had made it appear to them all that the advice he gave was the best that could be given, holy in its character, built on the foundation of true reason, and such as would surely bring consolation to Madonna Barbara, the friar in a very short space of time persuaded them to let build a vast and magnificent monastery, which, according to his wish, was called after the blessed Catherine of Siena, and settled in such wise that the governance thereof might never fall into strangers' hands. In this house,

together with Madonna Barbara, a great multitude of damsels of noble birth secluded themselves from the world, and there, under the ordinances and rules laid down by the aforesaid friar, they began to establish a very sanctified and perfect way of life—living in such wise, indeed, that no other than God, who alone knows the hidden secrets of all hearts, would have been able to find out that, by the working of the tainted soul of one wicked wretch, the great devil himself had already taken bodily possession of them. This fellow, in order to become privy to every inward thought of the young maidens, never ceased to exhort and persuade them that, in order to flee from the temptations of God's great adversary, there was to be found no course so meet and salutary as the constant resort to the holy practice of confession. Wherefore, fully carrying out this direction without suspecting aught of the great and hidden malignity which lay behind it, they set up a ravening wolf as the pastor of their gentle flock. He, being now well assured that he had baited his hook in the right way, perceived that the time had come to put in operation his lustful and nefarious design; so, having by cunning means got into his possession a certain little book belonging to Madonna Barbara, in which were written divers prayers of a very devout character, together with figures of the saints and of the Holy Ghost, he wrote therein, late on a certain evening, the following words in letters of gold, coming as it were out of the mouth of the Blessed Spirit: "Barbara, thou shalt find thyself with child by a righteous man, and shalt bring forth the fifth evangelist, who will give to us whatever may be wanting in the writings of the others; spotless thou shalt remain, and blessed shalt thou be in the sight of God." Having done this, he closed the book, and early the next morning he put it back in the place whence he had taken it the night before. Likewise he got ready

many other slips of paper, dainty blue in color, and inscribed in letters of gold with words of a similar nature. Having put these aside, he waited to make use of them in such a way as would best serve the purpose he had in view.

Barbara, having gone into her cell at the accustomed hour to recite the prayers she was wont to use, and having turned over the leaf whereupon was figured the Holy Ghost, perceived what manner of words had been there written afresh, and was utterly confounded at the sight which met her eyes. But after a little, having gathered together her wits somewhat, and having mastered the meaning of this awesome announcement, she felt herself assailed by no little wonder and confusion and anguish. She then set herself to read it over again, ever finding greater travail as she went on, and even became as one bewildered in her youthful, girlish, and as yet unsullied mind. Wherefore, wonder-stricken as she was, she tore herself away from the prayers she had just begun to say, and ran as quickly as she could to her spiritual father. And when she had drawn him somewhat aside, the maiden, conquered and overcome by girlish fears, showed to him the book with the gilded writing therein, weeping plentifully the while. Directly this met the eyes of the friar, he made a great show of being altogether stupefied with amazement, and, having signed himself with the sign of the cross, he addressed Barbara in these words: "My daughter, in my belief this thing is naught else than a temptation of the devil, who, ill pleased at the sight of your state of perfect righteousness, is seeking to set before you some perilous snare, in order to cause you to fall into eternal perdition. Wherefore I now admonish you, on behalf of God Himself, and of the sacred obedience you owe to Him, that you never, at any time whatsoever, lend a believing ear to this or to aught else of a similar character.

Nevertheless, I commend you highly for that you have laid this thing bare to me. But you must be careful always to act in like manner for the future. Of this I assure you, and I lay it upon you as a penance, to carry out my commands, for be well assured the snares which have been lately set to catch your soul will not be likely to become harmless except you make use of the well-tried remedy of holy confession. But by the help of this you shall go forth strong and enduring, ready to do battle with the accursed enemy of God; so that in the end you will win for yourself a double palm of victory, seeing that your strength will make itself perfect in weakness."

Thus with these, and with many other words of a like sanctimonious character, he let her spirit quiet itself somewhat from the agitation which his carefully-devised trickery had produced, and having gone out of her presence, he called to him a certain young clerk, according to a plan which he had already formed, and made this fellow hide himself withinside the oratory set up in the lady's chamber, giving him at the same time certain of the slips of paper of which mention has already been made, and directing him how and at what time he must send them forth to do their work. The gracious maiden, after she had gone into her chamber and set herself to prayer, beseeching God with all humility of heart that He would duly give her advertisement of any such event, was all of a sudden surprised at seeing one of these slips of paper fall into her lap. Having taken this in hand and read it, and remarked how richly adorned it was, and how it bore on its face words of a like purport in confirmation of the incarnation of a new evangelist, she fell at once into a violent fit of trembling. When she had risen from her knees and made ready to depart, she saw fall down a second missive, and then a third; indeed, before she left the place, there descended

of these no less than ten. Then she went forth from the chamber, overcome with the direst fear, and called the friar, and, half dead with agitation, showed him the aforesaid pieces of paper. This wolf in holy garb, letting his visage give token of the amazement which, as he feigned, possessed him, then said: "My daughter, of a truth these be things to raise in our hearts the greatest possible wonder. Such things may not be passed over without taking the most serious counsel thereanent; forasmuch as it is quite as likely that they are being revealed to us by divine inspiration as by the opposing principle. Wherefore it seems to me that we ought neither to let ourselves run heedlessly after this belief, nor to keep ourselves obstinately fixed in our original opinion, but rather that we should apply ourselves to the blessed exercise of prayer; you on one part, and I on the other, will lift up our prayers to God and beg Him that, of His supreme and infinite goodness, He will deign to give us clear assurance whether this revelation be true or whether it be false, whether we ought to give heed to it or to flee therefrom. Moreover, on the morrow it is my intention to hold a celebration in your chamber, when, by the instrumentality of the wood of the true and holy cross, and of other relics fitted for the purpose, we will put to flight all the works of the devil, and will see what thing Almighty God will show to us."

To Madonna Barbara it seemed that all this advice given by the friar was most godly, and worthy to be carried out. Wherefore she made answer that it would please her mightily to follow all his counsels. And when the next morning had come, the friar got up in good time, and set in position all his artillery in order to pay his oblation to Satan. Then, having first given the signal to the young clerk that he should betake himself to the spot where he had before stationed himself, the friar entered the chamber of the lady, being received

by her with tokens of deep reverence, and with a seeming of sanctity and devotion he began to celebrate mass. As long as the holy office went on, from the beginning thereof until the end, the young clerk did not cease from casting down the aforesaid slips of paper, of which his master had given him no small quantity to be used in this fashion. The young girl, when she saw them thus put forth without ceasing, and in such vast numbers (and each one bearing to her the same message), and perceived that neither her prayers, nor her vigils, nor all the other forms of discipline she had practiced, had worked for aught else than to confirm her in her belief, was fully persuaded that such a revelation as this could only come forth from the Holy Spirit. Wherefore, exulting within herself on account of this mighty fortune which had befallen her, she began to think of herself as blessed indeed, and furthermore believed that it was ordained that things should fall out for her in such fashion as was described on the slips of paper. When the mass was finished, and when she had duly gathered up the papers which had fallen down so finely both upon herself and upon the friar—papers which bore every mark of having been prepared and written by the hand of some blessed angel—she stood as one altogether possessed with joy and gladness.

The friar, to whom it seemed that the time had fully come when he might go and pluck the last and the most luscious fruit of so fertile a garden, now said: "My daughter, I see indeed, by reason of these signs, so numerous and so clearly manifested, that this thing is the will of God, and that any endeavors on our part to gain further assurance thereanent would be held to be nothing else than a presumptuous desire to pry more curiously into those things which spring from the divine intelligence, which, as thou mayest clearly see, is openly showing its desire to produce a treasure so precious

from that thrice happy womb of thine. Therefore, if we should still show ourselves to be unbelieving, I fear mightily the divine judgment would come upon us. At all events, so as to have no further hesitation as to the final confirmation of this matter, let us see whether in any part of the Holy Scriptures there may be found aught predicted of the same."

Then, having taken up the Bible forthwith, and turned over the leaves to a certain place in which he himself had put a mark, he came upon the passage in the Gospel of John where it is written, "And in the presence of his disciples Jesus wrought many other wonderful works, which are not written in this book." When he had read this, he turned to the lady and spake thus: "We have no need of any further witness. Behold and see how all our doubts are smoothed down! Of a truth, this one shall he be, concerning whom our evangelist makes mention—he who shall furnish us with all these things in which the others are lacking. Wherefore, if we should now go on questioning over and above what is necessary, it may be charged against us as presumption, and I, forsooth, will leave this burden to be borne by you alone, if you should still show yourself incredulous." The damsel, making answer to these last words of his, said: "Alas! my father, why should this saying, which in sooth is known to you alone, keep shut up in your inner consciousness all my welfare and all my hope? However, I shall always be ready to carry this thing into effect in such measure as may seem to you fitting and desirable."

The friar, seeing that the business was now brought to such a pass that it only remained for him to give the finishing stroke to his work, said: "My daughter, you speak indeed with wisdom, but there yet hangs in my mind one doubt unsatisfied. It is this: how shall we set to work to find the person in whom we can place

sufficient trust, and who will be fitted for this business, bearing in mind that the whole world swarms with men altogether given over to fraud and treachery?" Madonna Barbara, who was treating the matter with the utmost purity of mind, then made answer: "My father, these writings of ours tell us concerning this thing that he who is to be the maker of this one must be righteous and holy even as you yourself are, so I do not see who can better bring to pass this thing with me than you, especially as you are my spiritual father." To this the friar replied: "In truth I do not know how this deed can be wrought by me, seeing that I, as well as you, have promised to keep my body in chastity as long as I live. Nevertheless, it seems that I assuredly would be no just man were I to consent to allow your holy and most delicate flesh to be sullied by the touch of other hands; and, over and beyond this, I myself am well fitted and furnished for the increasing of the Christian religion. At the same time, I will not now neglect to remind you that you must never let yourself be carried away, so as to speak of this thing to anyone; for I doubt not at all that God would hold it for no trifling sin if it were to come to the knowledge of anybody else. And in this case, whereas now you are justly held to be the most highly blessed woman of this our age, you would thereby be turned immediately into a foe and a rebel against God."

The gracious maiden, giving him no other answer than the most solemn promises, affirmed that as long as she lived she would never make known this thing to anyone. "Now leave me," said the friar, "and this same evening, without further delay, we will make a beginning of this work; but because unions of this sort ought to be entered into for the praise and glory of the most high God, we must needs occupy ourselves with continual prayer until the hour of our coming together, in

order that we may enter these holy and divine mysteries with devout minds."

With this conclusion to his speech he betook himself to his own chamber, after he had been graciously dismissed by Madonna Barbara, and considering well in his mind how from his fruitful loins the holy evangelist would take being, he did not allow himself that day to defile his body with coarse food, such as he was wont often to consume in order to deceive others by a show of holiness, but took for the invigorating of his flesh the most delicate viands, the most exquisite sweetmeats, and the most sumptuous wines, all in temperate measure.

At last, when the hour was come which had been awaited by him with such keen desire, he entered with cautious tread the chamber of Madonna Barbara, who, still fasting and bathed in tears, had never once given over praying, and now, when she beheld the friar, rose upon her feet and gave him worshipful reception. Now he, albeit he was all on fire with lust to take his pleasure of the lady, and that every moment until he should find himself in her loving arms seemed to him a thousand hours, made up his mind nevertheless not to set about the amorous sport with aught of hasty lasciviousness, but to begin by seeing for himself whether the damsel was as fair to look upon naked and in candle-light as she was when clothed by day. Wherefore he bade her to strip herself naked, and she, although feeling the while smitten and overwhelmed with the deepest shame, obediently did all that he bade her do. When she had taken off all her clothes, and when he had divested himself of the greater part of his habit, he let kindle two great torches, and, having placed the lady betwixt these, and casting his eyes upon her flesh, delicate and smooth as ivory, which with its brightness outshone even the light of the enkindled flambeaux, he felt himself filled and overcome with so great con-

cupiscence that he let himself fall almost as one dead into her arms. Then, when he had recovered himself and placed himself before her on his knees, he made her be seated as if she were his sovereign lady, and with joined hands and bent head he thus spake: "Thee I adore, O most blessed womb, in which, in times soon to come, there will be generated that which will be the light of universal Christianity." And having thus spoken, and kissed her in the middle of her lilywhite loveliness, he fastened with greedy desire upon her sweet and rosy lips, and, without letting her go for a moment, he threw himself upon the bed, which had already been prepared, holding her in his arms. In what fashion they occupied themselves all the night through it may be figured by each without much difficulty; but I know well, according to what the lady said when, in after times, she told of what happened, that they attained not only the number of the fifth evangelist, but to the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Madonna Barbara, although she took the repast provided for her only in a spiritual sense, nevertheless, when she considered the same in her mind, came to the conclusion that this thing was the sweetest and most delicious pleasure that mortals could take or taste; so in the end it happened, the sport being so mightily pleasurable, that every night they found themselves fresh and eager to recommence the amorous struggle until such time as they should be fully assured that the evangelist had indeed been begotten. Passing their time in these delights, it fell out before long that Madonna Barbara became with child, and when this fact made itself apparent to both of them by manifest signs, one day the friar, being in fear of his life should the thing be known, said to her: "My daughter, thou seest that, forasmuch as it has thus pleased God, the end desired by us so greatly is now fulfilled, and that thou, being pregnant,

wilt, by God's pleasure, be duly brought to bed, on this account I am minded to take counsel with the Holy Father himself, and to announce to him the divine miracle which is about to ensue, for the reason that he may despatch hither a certain two of his cardinals, whose place it will be to canonize your offspring at his birth, who will be esteemed far above all other saints."

Madonna Barbara, who, as it has been already said, was of pure and simple mind, readily gave credence to these words, and, assailed by a fresh passion of vain-glory, felt no little pleasure that such a course as this should be taken on her account. The friar, seeing clearly that the vessel containing the new evangelist waxed greater in size every day that passed, got everything in order to quit the place; and, having taken from her divers other meals of pastry to stay his failing stomach, and bidden her farewell with little pleasure or contentment, he set forth on his journey, and in a short time found himself in Tuscany. What other feats he may have wrought after this, and what regions he may have traversed in order to beguile others by his tricks and craft, let him search out who is not already possessed with indignation. And it can, I trow, be held as a sure and certain fact that this precursor of Antichrist, into whatever land he may have come in the course of his wanderings, made all those who may have lent credence to his words to have a taste of the divinity of the angels in Paradise. Concerning Madonna Barbara, whom he left pregnant behind him, and who waited for a long time in vain the coming of the promised cardinals, I do not feel myself obliged to go seeking what fate may have been in store for her, nor what may have happened to her on the birth of her child. I only know right well that of this kind are the fruits and the leaves and the flowers which will assuredly come forth from the conversation and intimacy of these cheating friars.

ARGUMENT

Fra Nicolo da Narni being enamored of Madonna Agata, procures fulfillment of his desire. The husband happening to come upon them, the wife declares that the friar, by the virtue of certain relics, has delivered her of a distemper which afflicted her. But, having found the friar's breeches at the head of the bed, the husband becomes disturbed in his mind, whereupon the wife assures him that the breeches formerly belonged to San Griffone. This the husband believes, and in the end the friar causes them to be conveyed back to the convent in a solemn procession.

CATANIA, as we all know well, is reckoned a noble and illustrious place amongst the other famous cities of the island of Sicily. There, in times not long past, resided a certain doctor of medicine, Maestro Rogero Campisciano by name, and this man, although he was full of years, took to wife a damsel called Agata, sprung from a very honorable family of the city before-named, who, according to the opinion current in the place, was the fairest and most graceful lady at that time living in the island. On this account her husband held her as dear as he held his own life.

Now because it very rarely or never happens that a man who is hotly in love escapes long from the plague of jealousy, this good doctor in a very short space of time became so jealous of his wife, without any other reason than the aforesaid, that he forbade her to hold converse with anyone, using just as great severity toward her friends and relatives as toward strangers. And although he had very close relations with a community of friars minor in the city, being the keeper of their funds, the procurator of the order, and intimately acquainted with the whole course of their affairs, nevertheless, for the better safeguarding of his treasure, he commanded and laid a charge upon his wife that she should keep herself from all traffic with the friars, just as if

they had been dissolute laymen. It chanced, however, in the course of time, that there arrived in Catania a minor friar called Fra Nicolo da Narni, who, though he put on the air of a hypocrite, and was wont to walk clattering along with a pair of wooden sandals like prison shackles, with a leather patch on the breast of his frock, with bent neck, and a gait fitted for the canting knave he was in sooth, was nevertheless a fresh-colored, comely young fellow. And besides this, he had studied at Perugia, and had gained considerable knowledge of the doctrine there taught; was a far-famed preacher, and already enrolled as a fellow of the confraternity of San Bernardino—a fact he never failed to make known to anyone he might meet. He declared, moreover, that he had in his possession certain relics of this saint, by the virtue of which God had already shown, and still continued to show, many miracles. On account of this, and of the devout name enjoyed by his order, he drew to his preaching a marvelous great crowd of listeners, and in this wise it happened that, on a certain morning when he was preaching, he espied amongst the crowd of women in the church, the aforesaid Madonna Agata, who seemed to him to be as a carbuncle stone in the midst of a mass of the whitest pearls, and, letting fall upon her many glances from the tail of his eye without in any way interrupting his sermon, he said to himself over and over again that the man who should be held worthy to enjoy the love of such a beautiful young woman might indeed reckon himself most fortunate. Agata, as was the wont of all those who came to hear the preaching, kept her eyes steadily fixed on the preacher in admiration, and, since he appeared to her to be a young man comely beyond ordinary, she breathed a wish to herself (without letting her thoughts run into any undisciplined excess of lust) that her husband were made more in the likeness of this handsome friar, and at the

same time she began to think and to deliberate that she would like to go some day to make confession to Fra Nicolo. And thus, holding fast to this conceit of hers, as soon as she saw him come down from the pulpit she threw herself in his way, and besought him that he would vouchsafe to hear her. The friar, though he was inwardly overjoyed at her request, made answer to her, so as not to allow the corruption of his mind to show itself on his countenance, that it was no part of his duty to hear confessions. Whereupon the lady replied: "But may not I, for the sake of Maestro Rogero, my good husband, ask to enjoy some privilege at your hands?" To this the friar answered: "Ah, then you are the wife of our procurator? For the respect I bear to him I will willingly listen to your confession." And when they had withdrawn themselves somewhat aside, and the friar had taken up his position in the place where they were accustomed to hear confessions, and the lady had gone down on her knees before him, she began to confess herself according to the accustomed rule. After she had laid bare a certain portion of her offenses, telling the friar of the inordinate jealousy of her husband, she begged him of his kindness to let her know if there were any means within his power by which he could manage thoroughly to clear out of her husband's head all such delusions as these, believing perhaps that such ailments might be healed by herbs and plasters as her husband was wont to heal the sick folk under his charge. The friar set gladly to work to take into consideration a proposition such as this, for it seemed to him that now his good fortune was about to open for him the door which would give him the means of entering the path he so keenly desired to tread; wherefore, after he had given Madonna Agata consolation in somewhat flowery terms, he thus answered her: "My daughter, it is no marvel that your husband should be so jealous of you;

indeed, were his mood otherwise, he would be held by me, and by every other man as well, to be something less than the prudent gentleman he is. Nor ought he to be charged with fault on this account, seeing that this circumstance arises solely from the working of Nature, who, having produced you adorned with so great and angelic loveliness, has rendered it impossible that anyone should ever be the possessor of you without suffering the sharpest pangs of jealousy."

The lady, smiling somewhat at these words, saw that the time had now come when it behooved her to return to the attendants who were awaiting her; so after certain other soft words had been spoken, she begged the friar to give her absolution. He therefore, having heaved a deep sigh, turned towards her with a pitiful countenance, and thus made answer: "My daughter, no one who is himself bound can give release to another, and for the reason that you in so short space of time have made me a slave, I can neither absolve you, nor loose myself, without aid from you." The courteous lady, who was by birth a Sicilian, quickly comprehended the real meaning of this ambiguous speech, remarking besides what a good-looking young fellow he was, and feeling no small gratification that he seemed to be so mightily taken by her beauty. Still she was somewhat surprised to find that friars took thought of such matters, because, on account of her youth and the careful guard kept over her by her husband, she had not only been kept from all dealing with religious persons of every sort, but had even been made to believe that the making of men into friars differed naught from the making of cocks into capons. However, she saw clearly enough that Fra Nicolo was more of a cock than a capon, and with a longing such as she had never before known, and with the firm resolve to give him her love at all hazard, she thus answered him: "My father, leave all

your cares to me, forasmuch as I, coming here a free woman, must now return home the slave of you and of love." To this speech the friar replied, his heart filled with the greatest joy he had ever known: "Since then our desires run toward the same point, can you not devise some way by which we both of us, breaking forth at the same moment from this cruel prison, may taste the full joy our lusty youth permits?" To this she answered that she would willingly agree to this, supposing that a way could be found for its accomplishment, adding these words: "And now at this moment I am reminded of a plan whereby, in spite of the inordinate jealousy of my husband, we may be enabled to carry out our intention. For you must know that almost every month I am wont to be afflicted with a very grave distemper of the heart, so severe that it robs me of all power of sensation, nor up to this present time have I been able in the least degree to remedy the same by any device of the physicians. Indeed, certain women of experience in such matters have declared that my ailment proceeds from the womb, because I am young and fit to bear children, but by reason of the age of my husband I am not able to do this. Wherefore I have thought that on one of those days when my husband goes to ply his calling in the country, I might feign to be taken ill with one of my accustomed attacks. Then, having sent for you in haste, I might beg you to lend me certain relics of San Griffone, and you, on your part, must be prepared to come with them to me secretly; and afterwards, by the aid of a very trusty maid of mine, we can meet and take our pleasure together."

To this the friar, overjoyed, replied: "My daughter, may you be blessed by God for the excellent plan you have devised. It seems clear to me that we are in duty bound to carry it out, and I forsooth will bring with me a certain good friend of mine, who will not let your

trusty waiting-woman complain that she is neglected while we are enjoying ourselves." Then, having spent some time over the conclusion of the business, they parted with many warm and amorous sighs. As soon as she had returned home, the lady made known to her maid the plan she had devised with the friar for their common gratification and pleasure, whereupon the maid, who was mightily pleased at the news, made answer that everything her mistress might command should straightway be prepared.

It chanced that fortune was very kind to them, forasmuch as the very next morning Maestro Rogero betook himself to visit his patients outside the city, according to the prescient surmise of his wife, who at once, in order to let no delay interfere with the course of the affair, began to call upon San Griffone to come to her aid, feigning to be afflicted with an attack of her customary distemper. Then straightway the maid addressed her, as if by way of counsel: "Why do you not send for those sacred relics of the saint which have such miraculous fame amongst men of all sorts?" Thereupon the lady, according to the plan they had arranged between themselves, making believe that she could speak only with great difficulty, turned toward the maid, and spake thus: "Nay, I beseech you to send and fetch them," and to her the woman, as if she were filled with pity, replied: "I will go myself for them." So, having set forth at the top of her speed, and found the friar and given him the message which had been arranged, Fra Nicolo, together with a certain companion of his, a sprightly young fellow, and one well fitted for the business in hand, straightway set forth on his errand. When they were come into the chamber, and when Fra Nicolo, with a very devout look upon his face, had drawn anear the side of the bed upon which the lady was lying alone, she, who was tenderly awaiting him, received him with

the greatest humility, and said: "O father, pray to God and to the glorious San Grifone on my behalf." To this the friar replied: "May the Creator make you worthy of what you ask; but you on your part must give evidence of devout behavior, and if you are willing to accept His grace through the virtue of the holy relics I have with me, it is right and becoming that first we should resort with hearts full of contrition to the holy rite of confession, so that the soul, being brought back to health, the body may with ease be cleansed of its distemper." The lady answering, said: "Of a truth I have anticipated, and never wished for aught else than what you speak of, and this grace I beg most earnestly at your hands."

When they had thus spoken together, they gave courteous dismissal to all such persons as chanced to be in the chamber, so that there remained therein no one else except the maid and the companion who had come with the friar. Then, having securely locked themselves in, so that they might be in no danger of interruption, each lover began incontinently to raise the flame of desire with his lady. Fra Nicolo got upon the bed, and deeming that he might reckon on perfect security, took off his breeches in order that he might the better use his legs when freed from such impediment, and flung the garments aforesaid on the head of the bed. Then, having folded the lovely young woman in a close embrace, he began with her the sport so full of delight and so keenly desired by them both. The friar, who did not meet with such good luck every day of his life, gave full proof of his manhood, and once and twice reaped the full harvest of his desire; but, just as he was preparing for a third essay, he and Madonna Agata were made aware that Maestro Rogero on horseback was down below, he having come back sooner than they had anticipated from his journey. The friar in great haste

flung himself off the bed, overcome with fear and vexation, and forgetting entirely the breeches which he had laid at the bed's head, while the waiting-woman, not at all pleased that the business she had begun with her swain must needs be abandoned, unfastened the door of the chamber, and, having called to the people who were waiting in the hall without, bade them come in at their pleasure, adding that, by the grace of God, her lady was now well-nigh entirely healed of her ailment, and praising God and San Griffone.

In this wise the matter stood when Maestro Rogero came into the chamber, and, as soon as he realized that something strange had happened, he was no less disturbed at finding that friars had begun to frequent his house than at the fresh indisposition of his beloved spouse; but she, observing at a glance that his humor was mightily changed, cried out: "Oh! husband, of a truth I should have been a dead woman by this time if our good father the preacher had not come to my aid with the relics of the most blessed San Griffone. These, as soon as he brought them near to my heart, took away all the pain and agony I suffered, just as a plentiful flood of water quenches a little fire." The credulous husband, when he heard how a remedy had at last been found for an ailment hitherto deemed incurable, fell thanking God and San Griffone with no small satisfaction, and at last, turning to the friar, gave him unbounded thanks for the great benefit he had wrought, and thus, after exchanging certain other speeches in devout and saintly discourse, the friar and his companion took their leave in the most seemly wise, and went their way back to the monastery.

Now, as they were walking along, Fra Nicolo began to feel somewhat cold about the breech, and then it came into his mind how he had left behind him at the head of the bed the garment he usually wore; where-

upon, overcome beyond measure with grief and confusion, he turned to his companion and told him of the accident which had befallen him. His friend consoled him as best he could, and bade him cease from disquieting himself, forasmuch as the maid, who would be the first to find the breeches, would assuredly hide them, and, laughing as he spoke, added these words: "My master, it is quite clear that you are not wont to put up with inconvenience of any sort, since it seems that you needs must, wherever you may be, straightway clap clothing upon those parts of yours. But perhaps you follow the example of the Dominican friars, who always take their dogs about with them unconfined by leash of any sort, and, although they often get fine sport, it is nevertheless a fact that hounds that are leashed are always keener and more holding in their grip when they come upon game." To this the friar replied: "What you say is true enough, but would to God that no scandal may arise on account of the fault I have committed; and, tell me, how did you fare with the prey I let fall into your clutches? For my own part, I know that in my hawking I managed to capture a brace of partridges, and, just as I was trying for a third, Messer Rogero came back." His friend answered: "I am no smith myself; but what do you say of a workman who managed to make two nails out of one heating of the furnace, and had got one finished complete, and the other only lacking the head thereto, when the girl, cursing the hour she was born, cried out, 'Here is the maestro at the door'? And thus the work which you had put in my way was left incomplete." Said the friar: "May God be willing to grant me leave to go back to the sport I was forced to give over, and then you, too, if you should still be in the mood therefor, may turn out your nails by the hundred." To this the friend replied: "You will find not me wanting, but in sooth I believe the feathers

of those two partridges you took are worth more than all the nails they make in Milan." At this speech the friar laughed heartily, and with many other witty words concerning their late adventure, they went on, joking between themselves.

As soon as the friars had left the chamber, Maestro Rogero, going close up to his wife's side and caressing her neck and her bosom, demanded to know from her whether the pain which had molested her had caused her great suffering. In the course of their conversation over this and over other matters, it chanced that Maestro Rogero, stretching out his hand to compose the pillows under his wife's head, caught hold of the laces of the breeches which the friar had left there.

When he had drawn them forth, and observed of a surety they were of the sort commonly worn by friars, he cried out with a face changed mightily: "What the devil can be the meaning of this? O Agata! for what reason are these friar's breeches here?" But the young wife, who was very wary and prudent (and love, moreover, had recently aroused yet more her intelligence), made answer without delaying her speech a moment: "And what can be the meaning of the long story I have just told you, my husband, if these be not the miraculous breeches which formerly belonged to the glorious San Grifone, and which our good father, the preaching friar, brought hither this morning as one of the most famous relics of the saint? Wherefore Almighty God, by the virtue of these, has already shown me great favor, and though I was fully assured of being entirely freed from my trouble, yet for greater security, and for piety's sake as well, I besought Fra Nicolo, when he was about to take it away, that he would leave it with me until the time of vespers, at which hour he or some others should send for it." The husband, when he heard this answer so ready and so well fitted for the occasion, either be-

lieved it in truth or made as if he believed it; but, having within him the nature of a jealous man, his brain was buffeted about without ceasing by the two contrary winds which this accident had stirred up; nevertheless, without giving any further answer to the remarks of his wife, he held his peace. The wily young woman, being well assured that her husband was still somewhat disturbed in his mind, now began to scheme how she might by a new stratagem clear out entirely from his breast all the suspicious thoughts he there nursed; so turning toward her maid, she said: "Go now at once to the convent, and as soon as you shall have found the friar preacher, tell him to send and fetch the relics which he left with me, for by God's mercy I have had no occasion to use them more." The discreet waiting-woman, comprehending fully what the lady in truth wanted to say, went with all speed to the convent, and bade them quickly summon the friar preacher, who came straightway to the door, deeming peradventure that she had come to bring back the keepsake which he had left behind him. But he put on a smiling face as he spake to her, and asked her what news she bore. "No good news, in sooth," she answered, with a very ill grace, "thanks to your carelessness, and it would have been worse but for the prudence of my mistress." "Tell me what it is," cried the friar; and then the girl related to him, point by point, all that had happened, adding that it seemed to her there was no better way out of the affair than that they should send from the monastery to fetch the aforesaid relics with a certain parade of ceremony without further delay. Then the friar said, "Keep your mind at ease;" and, having taken leave of her and bidden her to hope that all things which had been ill done would straightway be repaired, he sought out the superior, and spake to him in these words: "Good father, I have just committed a most grievous sin, one for which in due

time you can punish me as I deserve, but just now I beseech you to give me instant help, as the needs of the case demand, in order that this mischance may be set right without delay," and then Fra Nicolo set forth the whole story in as brief a fashion as possible. The superior, finding himself perturbed in no small measure over the affair, took the friar sharply to task for his imprudence, and thus addressed him: "See now what comes of working miracles! A clever fellow you are, in sooth! You fancied, indeed, that you could go safely to work; but, if you found you must needs take off your breeches, could you not think of some other way of hiding them, either in the sleeves or in the breast of your gown, or in some other secret place about your person? You, wonted as you are to be mixed up in such scandals as these, recked naught as to the great burden of conscience and obloquy of the world with which we of your order shall have to battle. Of a truth I know not what reason there is why I should not forthwith send you to prison as you richly deserve. Nevertheless, seeing that at the present moment it behooves us to endeavor to mend matters rather than to inflict punishment, and that the affair concerns especially the honor of the order, we will postpone your chastisement to some future time."

Then, having set ringing the bell of the chapter house, and let assemble all the friars, the superior told them how, in the house of Maestro Rogero the physician, God had that very day wrought a most evident miracle by the virtue of the breeches which formerly belonged to San Griffone. Having told them the story in the fewest possible words, he persuaded them that it behooved them to go forthwith to the house of the aforesaid physician, and bring back therefrom the holy relic with high solemnities and a procession, whereby they might give honor and glory to God, and cause the miracles of the saint to be held in yet higher esteem.

When the friars were duly mustered and ranged two by two, they took their way toward the house in question with the cross at the head of the procession. The superior, clad in a sumptuous cope, bore the tabernacle of the altar on his arm, and marching along in silence they came to the physician's house. When Maestro Rogero became aware of their presence he went out to meet the superior, and demanded of him the cause of this unwonted visit, whereupon the latter, with a joyous face, made answer to him in terms he had before arranged: "Well-beloved Maestro, the rules of our order require that we should carry in secret the relics of our saint to the house of anyone who may wish to have them, and in like manner if it should happen that the sick person, through any failing of his own, should receive no benefit from the ministration, that we should privily fetch them home again in order that the fame of miracles should not be diminished thereby. But in cases in which God, through the means of the above-named relics, may have willed to exhibit miracles past gainsaying, it is our duty to fetch the holy relic back to our church with all the ceremony and splendor we can afford, thus proclaiming abroad the miracle which has been wrought, and recording it in public form. And for the reason that your wife (as you must already know) has been freed from the dangerous disease which afflicted her, through the working of our relic, we are now come in this solemn fashion to bear it back to our house." The physician, when he marked how the whole congregation of friars was come thither with so great a show of devotion, at once settled in his mind that these holy men would never have gathered themselves together to work any ill purpose; so, accepting as gospel truth the fictitious reasons of the superior, and driving away entirely all suspicious thoughts from his mind, he spake thus: "In sooth, you are all right welcome;" and, hav-

ing taken the friar preacher by the hand, he led him into the chamber where Madonna Agata still was. She, who had in no wise gone to sleep over the business, had now the breeches all ready, and wrapped in a white and perfumed linen cloth. The superior, when they were displayed to him, kissed them with the deepest reverence, and made the physician and the lady do the same, and in the end all those who were assembled in the room kissed them likewise. Next, after they had placed the breeches in the tabernacle which they had brought with them for that purpose, and after a sign had been given to the company, they all began to sing in unison *Veni Creator Spiritus*, and in this order, traversing the city and accompanied by a huge crowd, they bore the relic back to their church and there placed it above the high altar, letting it remain several days in order that all those who had already heard of the miraculous occurrence might pay their devotions to it. Maestro Rogero, being very keenly set on increasing the reverence of the people round about toward the order aforesaid, let pass no opportunity of telling the story to whatsoever gatherings of men he chanced to encounter as he went about his practice both within and without the city, setting forth the solemn miracle which God had wrought through the healing power of the breeches of San Griffone. And while he occupied himself in the discharge of this office, Fra Nicolo and his friend in no wise forgot to make a fresh trial of that rich hunting-ground which they had already explored, to the great delight both of the mistress and of the maid. Madonna Agata, independent of any sensual delight she might enjoy, came to the conclusion that this operation was in truth the only one of any service to cure her acute attacks; for the reason that it brought relief to the very seat of her distemper. Besides this, being the wife of a physician, she had often heard tell of that text of

Avicenna in which he lays down the dictum, "That those remedies which are approximate and partial may give ease, but those which are continuous will work a cure." Wherefore, having tasted both the one sort and the other with much delight, she was duly conscious that, through the opportune ministrations of the holy friar, she had been entirely freed of the incurable mother-sickness which had plagued her so long.

ARGUMENT

Massimilla, being amorously looked upon by a priest, and by a tailor as well, promises her favors both to the one and to the other. While she is taking her pleasure in her house with the tailor, the priest comes for what has been promised him, and tries to gain entry by force. Whereupon the tailor, being mightily alarmed, seeks shelter in the garret. The priest comes in and says that he has a wish to send the Pope to Rome. The tailor, seeing that a festival is at hand, deems that it ought not to be ungraced by music, so he blows a note on the pipes, which puts to flight the priest. Then the tailor takes possession of the booty left behind.

IN the most authentic records, and those most worthy of being kept in remembrance, we may read concerning the high estate and the wealth which in times past existed in that delightful region lying on the sea-coast by Amalfi; and although, in dealing with these bygone days, we may speak in this, or even in a more boastful strain, nevertheless, when we look upon its present condition, we must see that not only is the wealth gotten through mercantile enterprise greatly diminished, and the sumptuous palaces fallen to ruin, but that the inhabitants thereof can to-day only get them a sustenance with great difficulty. Therefore, coming back to our story, I will tell you that not far from the city (the name of which, so delightful is the site thereof, in a cer-

tain sense describes it), there was situated a village in which, not a great time ago, lived a priest, Don Battimo by name, a man who, albeit he was country bred, was in no wise lacking in skill and understanding. He was young, and very robust in body, and on the whole was more given to the service of the ladies round about than to the celebration of the holy office and the prescribed services of the hours. Wherefore, through the frequent following of sport of this kind, he brought it to pass that divers poor wights of the neighborhood found their brows decked with ram's-horn crowns.

At last it came to pass that one day he let his eyes fall upon a certain young woman, a neighbor of his, whose name was Massimilla, the wife of a poor carpenter; but she, although on account of her great beauty she was wont to pique herself not a little whenever she might ensnare the fancy of a lover, when she became aware that the priest was in no small way taken with her, never deigned to bestow upon him any greater favor than a single pleasant glance; perhaps because she had let her thoughts stray in another direction. The priest, a man by nature both eager and fickle, as soon as he realized that he pleased the young woman but little by making eyes at her, and that his prayers and flattering speeches had no effect upon her, began to follow her up with the greatest importunity with cries, and even with threatening words, in such a manner that she, more through weariness and fear for herself than through any longing she felt for him, at last gave him her promise that one day, when her husband might happen to be out of the way, he might have his will of her.

On this account the priest rested content to let affairs go on as she had promised; and while he, in good faith, kept back awhile his ardor, it happened that a young man belonging to another village near by, a tailor, Marco by name, fell in like manner very hotly in love with

Massimilla. Now this young man, being gifted with very moderate skill at his craft, spent the greater part of his time in frequenting the feasts round about, and making very pleasing music upon a bagpipe which belonged to him, and, seeing that he was both in face and person a very seemly fellow—and, besides this, always furnished with a store of fresh quips—he was readily welcomed wherever he might go. Wherefore he found far greater reason for following business of this sort than for exercising his original trade. And because, as I have already said, he was enamored beyond all bounds with the aforesaid young woman, spending his time in ogling her after the most courtly and gentle fashion he knew how to use, in order to cause her to regard him in the same wise, and because he was so mightily persistent in his amorous pursuit, it came to pass that one day he got from Massimilla a promise like to the one she had given with so much distaste to the importunate priest. On this account Maestro Marco was almost beside himself with delight, and looked forward to the departure of the luckless husband with no little pleasure and longing, a thing which both the priest and the wife herself awaited with just as great anxiety. As their good luck, which forsooth was bad luck for the husband, would have it, not many days passed before he had occasion to go as a sailor on board a caravel which was bound on a voyage to Palermo.

A very short time after his departure there happened to be held a festival in a certain place which lay quite near to his home, and Maestro Marco, having been bidden to the same to make music with his pipes, was delighted beyond all measure when he found there Massimilla, who had gone thither with some other peasants. Wherefore, having given each other many loving glances during the day, when the hour came for the ending of the revels Maestro Marco made his way to the young

woman's side very cautiously, and with as few words as he could make serve his purpose, begged her that, of her kindness, she would keep the promise she had made to him some time ago. The young woman, to whom the mere promise had seemed an affair light enough, now in discreet and wary fashion prepared to fulfil the same, a matter which likewise offered little difficulty; so, after exchanging all sorts of soft speeches in the manner of rustic lovers, she said to the young man: "In a very short time from now I shall go my way hence, and shall pass along the road which cuts across from here. Therefore, do you keep good watch, and, as soon as I shall have gone away, follow me at once, so that we may contrive to come into some safe and well-chosen spot such as our business demands."

Now there belonged to Massimilla a little house with a garden attached thereto, situated upon the side of the mountain above the hamlet, in which place her husband plied his calling instead of in a shop, working there at timber for ship-building. Now and then, indeed, in the time of summer, he would go with all his household and abide there altogether, and to this place the young woman deemed she might go with safety and take her pleasure with Maestro Marco, not only for the portion of the day which had yet to run, but likewise for a good part of the following night. Maestro Marco, highly delighted with this march of affairs, turned to a little boy of his who was with him, and, having given him the bag belonging to his pipes, bade him carry the same back to his house, while he stowed away the mouthpiece in his girdle. Then, when he had marked that Massimilla had left the festival, he followed quickly upon her track, as soon as he thought that he had given her time enough. And, having each traversed the country intervening in about the same time, they met once more at the cottage which had already been designated as the place of their

foregathering, and, having entered therein and made fast the door, they duly settled themselves to the pleasant task they had in hand.

The priest, knowing nothing whatever of all this, and harboring not the least suspicion of such a man as Marco, was only aware that the husband of Massimilla had taken ship to Palermo, and that she herself had been at the merry-making. Wherefore he, deeming that she would by this time have returned home, and foreseeing that he would find her at her wonted dwelling-place in the village, made up his mind to put his fortune to the touch; so, having set himself upon the road, accoutered with a huge cutlass which he styled his "*Salvum me fac*," he took his way with leisurely steps, as if he were walking for his pleasure, toward the dwelling of Massimilla. This he found to be fast shut from the outside; whereupon he at once settled in his mind that she would surely be in the place where she really was, forasmuch as she was accustomed often to go thither. He knew the spot well enough, and the sort of path which led thereto, and, although this seemed to him somewhat hard to tread on account of the fierce heat, he turned his steps toward the hillside, and, urged on by love, at last arrived at the cottage aforesaid, puffing and blowing not a little from shortness of breath.

Thus, at the very same moment when Maestro Marco was just beginning to kiss and fondle his lass, the priest, believing that she was within and alone, knocked at the door with no little delight in his heart. The young woman giving over her kissing for the nonce, cried out, "Who is without there?" And to this the priest made answer: "It is I—your own Don Battimo." "In sooth that might be good hearing at any other time," replied the young woman. Thereupon the priest answered: "And do you mean to say you know what my will is, at such a time as this, when, forsooth, there is neither your

husband nor anyone else to stand in the way? Open to me, I pray you." Hearing these words she cried, "Ah! go away, and God go with you, my good man, for the reason that I am, at present, in no way ready to do what you propose." The priest, mightily upset at this answer, cried out, without taking further heed of his words: "By God's faith, if you do not open to me forthwith, I will beat your door down to the ground, and will then have my will of you, whether you like it or not; and afterwards I will go and proclaim your disgrace through all the country."

Massimilla, understanding clearly from the nature of the words spoken by the priest that he must surely be in one of his headstrong moods, and that he would as soon carry out his threat as utter it, turned to Maestro Marco, who was shaking with fear in every limb just like herself, through knowing what a reckless, giddy-pated fellow the priest was, and thus addressed him: "Dear heart of mine, you must understand clearly enough how great is the peril in which we both of us are placed on account of this unchained devil and accursed of God. Therefore I beg you, for the safeguarding of us both, to get yourself quickly up that little ladder into the pigeon loft. Then, when you shall have mounted to the upper floor, and drawn up the ladder after you, you must stay there for a little time, being careful the while to make no sound of any sort. Meantime, I hope that by one method or another I may get him to quit this place—and may bad luck go with him!—without suspecting aught as to how we have been occupying ourselves, and without taking away with him anything that is ours."

Now Maestro Marco, who, as far as courage was concerned, was much more like a sheep than a lion, straightway agreed to carry out exactly the hasty advice of the young woman, and at once set himself to follow all the directions she had given him, and as soon as he had

gained the loft he put his eye to a crack that there was in the floor, and waited with no slight pangs to see what indeed might be the issue of the jest. Meantime the priest still kept on clamoring that the door should be opened to him; and as soon as the young woman saw that her lover was safely stowed away, she ran with a smiling face to undo the door, and, putting her hand opened to him; and as soon as the young woman saw that she had a mind to talk with him. The priest was inflamed with desire to possess her as fierce as that of the starving wolf for the timid kid, and without either good manners or restraint he began not only to cover her with kisses—as forsooth Maestro Marco had done a minute ago—but even to bite her in his amorous rage, neighing aloud as if he had been some fierce war horse. Feeling himself now fully ready for the fray, he declared that, come what might, he was determined to send the Pope to Rome. Hereupon Massimilla, who knew well enough that she was all the while observed by Maestro Marco, cried out, “What Pope may this be, and what merry words are these which you speak?” And though she put on an angry look, she made but a weak defense of herself. The priest, who every moment became more and more inflamed with desire, cut short his words and straightway determined to proceed to deeds; so, having dexterously turned her over upon a little couch and got himself valiantly in order for the first course, he placed his hand upon his sword and cried out, “Now the Pope is going into Rome.” And this time, in sooth, His Holiness wore the pallium meet for such festivals, and presented himself more than once before the very altar and the tribune of Saint Peter. Maestro Marco, whose vexation had by this time in some degree driven away his fear, was, as it has already been noted, a very witty fellow; wherefore finding himself now in perfect safety from any assault, and seeing what manner of game it

was that was going on, albeit it was to him a very hateful spectacle, he took counsel with himself how he might play some new jest; so, having taken out from his girdle the pipe he carried there, he said to himself, "By my faith, this is not the sort of festival they hold when the Pope makes his entry into Rome—not a note of music of any sort do I hear." And then forthwith he put the pipe to his mouth and began to blow thereon a most wonderful entrance march, making all the while a huge clamor and stamping on the floor, which was made of planks. The priest, who had not yet come to the end of his sporting, as soon as he heard the music and the loud confused clatter which was going on over his head, was at once seized with the fear that the kinsfolk of the young woman and of her husband must be at hand, *cum gladiis et fustibus*, with a view of putting injury and shame upon him; so, mightily dismayed and using greater speed than he had ever yet put forth, he gave over the game which he had begun without being able to finish. Calling to mind the whereabouts of the door and finding the same open, he gave play to his legs the swiftest he knew how to employ, and made his way home without once stopping or turning his head to look behind him. Maestro Marco, as soon as he was assured that this fresh scheme of his had come to a happier issue than he had ever deemed it could attain, made his descent with a gladness of heart much greater than had been the fear with which he had gone up, and found the young woman almost choking with excessive laughter, so much so that she had not yet risen from the couch. Wherefore he at once resumed possession of the booty which awhile ago he had lost; and as the Pope had been duly honored with music when he had made his entry into Rome, so Maestro Marco now brought the Turk into Constantinople with a mighty pleasant spell of dancing.

ARGUMENT

Joanni Tornese, by reason of his jealousy, causes his wife to disguise herself in man's attire whenever she goes abroad with him; but a certain cavalier, her lover, enjoys her in the presence of a friend of the husband, who in a state of frenzy takes his wife home afterwards: the doings of the wife are noised abroad, and Joanni dies of vexation, whereupon the wife again marries and leads a merry life.

TO come therefore to the matter I propose to deal with, I will tell you that in the times of my most illustrious lord, Duke Filippo Maria Visconti, there lived in Milan a certain handsome and noble cavalier called by name Messer Ambrosio del Andriani. This same cavalier was young, rich, of very goodly person, and of excellent manners; and, being led by the generous bent of his rare intellect to become acquainted with the dignities and the famous deeds of the various princes of Christendom, he went searching after the same in many places both within and without the bounds of Italy. At last there was brought to him report of the magnificent state and the triumphal feasts which King Alfonso of immortal memory, your grandfather, was accustomed to maintain and to celebrate without intermission in the city of Naples, and on this account he determined to be a witness of these likewise, and thereby to satisfy his desires to the full. So, having put a thousand florins in his purse and furnished himself with horses and servants and raiment worthy of his condition, he took his way toward Naples.

When he had come there, and had well surveyed the many stately quarters of the city and the delightful surroundings thereof, he came to the conclusion that the Naples in which he was now abiding was no less fair than the Naples he had prefigured in his mind. Thus for this reason, and for that which had originally led him

thither, he determined in his mind to tarry there, enjoying himself and living merrily as long as the money he had brought with him should serve his needs. It happened that he foregathered with certain gentlemen of Capuana, and, having been taken by these now to festivals, now into churches, and now to joustings, places where great crowds of ladies were gathered together, he said one day to his companions, after he had well considered the dames around him, that in his opinion the ladies of Naples were better furnished with graceful presence and with womanly worth than rich in superabundant beauty. Whilst he was discoursing in this strain, a certain youth, one of his most intimate companions, Tommaso Caracciolo by name, who chanced to be present, affirmed that what the cavalier had just said was no other than the truth, and added somewhat on his own account, speaking thus: "If it should ever be your fate to catch sight of a young woman living at Nola, the wife of a certain shoemaker named Joanni Tornese, I doubt not at all but that you, following the example of divers others I have already heard speak on the matter, would straightaway confess that this young woman is the most beautiful you have ever seen in Italy. But to bring this thing to pass seems to me almost impossible, seeing that the husband keeps her shut up in such fashion that no one, however closely related to her, can ever get sight of her, on account of his unheard-of jealousy, and on account of certain suspicions which have been kindled in his mind from a report that the Lord Duke of Calabria, having been inflamed by the fame of her marvelous beauty, seeks to put her to the proof. And if another tale be true which a neighbor of his, who is also a servant of mine, told me for certain (but I know not in sooth whether I ought to lend any credence to the same), you will hear a very strange report concerning her, and this is that the husband, so as

not to leave her at home alone in his absence, is in the habit of always taking her with him to whatever place he may visit disguised in man's attire; and thus, without incurring any suspicion, he goes on his way rejoicing, and enjoys the merriest time that is possible for a peasant in this our land. Wherefore, if it would meet your wishes, I would suggest that we might go and make an attempt to get sight of her beauty."

Thereupon, without any further parley, they set forth in company and betook themselves to the shoemaker's shop. Having come there, Tommaso said: "Master cobbler, have you by chance some pairs of neatly-made shoes which you can show to Messer Ambrosio here?" Whereupon Joanni replied: "Assuredly I have, at your pleasure." And having admitted the cavalier, he made him sit down on a bench, and began to fit certain shoes on his feet. Tommaso, who sought to lengthen out the time of such business, turned to them and said: "Come now, I will go on and despatch some affairs of my own at a place near by, while you are engaged in finding a well-fitting pair of shoes." And excusing himself with these words he went his way, and the shoemaker began forthwith to try the shoes on Messer Ambrosio, keeping his head bent down low as it is necessary for a man to do when engaged on such a task.

Messer Ambrosio in the meantime held his head erect, turning his face around on all sides, for the reason that every thought of his was bent on catching a glimpse of the beautiful mistress of the house; and, as his good fortune would have it, he fixed his eyes upon a little latticed window, and saw at the same time the woman herself, who was looking down upon him in the shop below. As he had good space of time wherein to get a clear and perfect sight of her, he looked well at her, and in the end, after he had feasted his eyes on the rich and priceless beauties which were exhibited in her face, it seemed

to him that she was in sooth endowed with an excellence of beauty far greater than that which his friend Tommaso had led him to expect. Thus, on account of the length of time which Master Joanni took in settling him with a pair of well-fitting shoes, he found plentiful opportunity not only of scanning closely her face, but also of letting her know by various soft and amorous signs how hotly he was burning with love for her sake.

Now the young woman, who was of a very wary temper, was well assured that, on account of her husband's extreme watchfulness, she would never find an opportunity of satisfying the cavalier's wishes by any act of hers, and, although she was filled with delight at the thought that she herself had seemed pleasant in the sight of such a gracious gentleman, she determined not to exhibit to him any sign of her goodwill or to return him any gracious answer. And in this fashion the fitting on of the shoes at last came to an end; whereupon the cavalier, having paid to the shoemaker double price for his wares, thus addressed him, with a merry look on his face: "In good sooth, I have never in all my life worn shoes which, according to my taste, have fitted me so well as these; wherefore see that you have ready for me every day a fresh pair of the same fashion, for which I will not fail to pay you always the same price." The shoemaker, overjoyed at his good luck, held it to be indeed a most fortunate accident which had led so gallant and generous a cavalier to come into his shop, and, deeming that he might draw great profit from such custom in the future, he said: "So be it in God's name! and I, on my part, give you promise that each time you come to my shop you shall find yourself served better and better."

In the mean time Messer Ambrosio returned to his friend Tommaso, rejoicing mightily, and telling him in what generous wise his kind fortune had dealt with him

at the outset of the adventure, affirming at the same time that the face of this woman was by far the most lovely he had ever seen, but that with regard to the rest of her person he could give no opinion, for the reason that he had been able to get no glimpse thereof. He summed up his speech by begging his friend to give him freely whatever prudent counsel he might have to offer concerning the affair in question. Tommaso, although he harbored but little hope that the business would come to the issue the other desired, began, like the exceptional friend he was, to try to be of some service to Messer Ambrosio, and to sharpen his wits as best he could, without in any way letting drop the discussion or leaving the spot. In their conversation they ran over all such ways and means as fervent lovers are wont to dream of in crises of this sort, and when at last they fixed upon a particular one which seemed to them propitious and fitted to their needs, they proposed to bide their opportunity until the conditions of time and place should prove to be such as would let them conveniently carry their scheme into effect.

Now, seeing that the cavalier followed without fail his purpose of going every day to buy a fresh pair of shoes at the wonted price, it happened that the shoemaker, in order to lure him on to further spending, began to address him in yet more servile fashion, and would now and again invite him in the morning to partake of a light collation in a private apartment he had at the back of his shop, the cavalier feeling no small gratification at these blandishments. The friendship thus begun between the two men continued, and when the day of Santa Catarina had come, a day upon which great crowds of people are wont to betake themselves to Formello, Messer Ambrosio began to walk up and down in front of the Castello, his lodging being very near thereto, and to speculate as to whether he might

catch sight of Joanni Tornese at the festival, with his fair wife arrayed in the fashion already noticed. He had not waited there long when he espied from a distance Joanni Tornese with a young scholar leaning on his arm coming toward him; whereupon he straightway understood that the thing upon which he had already reckoned had indeed come to pass.

Now, as Joanni was going along, it chanced that there met him on the way a very close friend and gossip of his, and as they walked on in company this latter demanded to know who might be the young man he had with him; whereupon Joanni answered him, as he had answered divers others before, that the youth was a brother-in-law of his, a student of medicine from Nola, who had come thither on a visit to his sister. Whilst they were talking in this strain they came to the spot where the cavalier was walking backward and forward, and after they had all saluted him by doffing their caps, and had been saluted by him in return, he fixed his eyes steadfastly on the face of the young scholar, and was soon well assured that the one he saw was she whom he had been awaiting with such keen desire. Then, with a joyful look on his face, he asked them whither they were bound, and they replied that they were on their way to Santa Catarina; whereupon Messer Ambrosio, having joined himself to their company, went along with them, and in the course of the way spake thus: "And I too on my part had purposed to go thither, and I was tarrying here by myself, awaiting the coming of my servants or of certain of my acquaintances who might bear me company; but, seeing that none of them have come, I will go with you." Then, having set out all together on their way, they arrived at last at the place where the festival was being celebrated, and found there assembled a vast crowd of people. On this account the cavalier had now and again a chance

of pressing the hand of the young scholar to let her know clearly that he had recognized her, and when she, knowing perfectly well who he was, made answer to him in the same fashion, it seemed to him that his wishes were about to be fully accomplished, and he was satisfied beyond measure thereanent.

Early that same morning Messer Ambrosio had given full instructions to the host with whom he lodged as to everything that was necessary to be said and done for the carrying out of the project he had in hand, and had likewise despatched all his servants on various errands, so that not one of them would be seen until late in the day. Therefore he kept company with these people until the festival had come to an end, and then took his way back with them toward his lodging. When they had arrived in front of the house where he was staying, he took Joanni by the hand and began to speak with him in these words: "Good maestro, you have so often bid-ben me to your board, and have done me so much honor in your own house, that now it seems to me right and seemly that you, together with your companions, should stay here and take your breakfast with me this morning, although I am a stranger in these parts." Joanni, who, as we have heard before, was of a very jealous temper, and feared the very birds of the air for his wife's sake no less than men, felt very little in the humor to take her into an inn, albeit she had changed her woman's garb for that of a man. So more than once he refused the proffered invitation, and demurred to accept it; but at last, moved by the fear of giving offense to his friend, and urged on by the eager persuasions and promptings of his worthy gossip, he was induced to accede to Messer Ambrosio's request.

When all the company had gone together to a small terrace where they found ready prepared a well-decked table, the cavalier called for the landlord forthwith, and

demanded of him what had become of all his servants; whereupon the host answered and said that they were all gone to the market to buy oats and fodder. Hearing this, Messer Ambrosio feigned to be mightily disturbed, and said: "Though they should all be hanged by the neck we will carry out the affair we have in hand; wherefore do you have a care to give us something of the best for our repast." To this the host made answer in words which had been previously settled: "Messere, I have here prepared no delicate viands of the sort that would suit your taste." "How is that, you lazy rascal?" cried the cavalier. "In sooth I have a good mind to scoop out your eyes with this very hand. I have spent in your house more than two hundred florins, and now that I have brought hither with me these friends of mine, at whose hands I have received a thousand tokens of honor and kindness, you are not ashamed to tell me that you have nothing that is fit for us to eat." Whereupon the host, feigning to be frightened out of his wits, answered: "Do not be angry, messere, for were the king himself in the house you should be served straightway." But the cavalier, turning toward him in a furious rage, said to him: "Be off with you, then, beast that you are, and see that you put to roast for me some of the best capons you have." The landlord forthwith departed to carry out these orders, and the cavalier still kept up the show of being in a raging mood; whereupon his guests exhorted him to have patience, forasmuch as in any case he might, without fail, regard them as his devoted servants. Messer Ambrosio thanked them kindly and said: "In sooth, I am well minded to hang up one or other of these varlets of mine, when they shall come back, for having left me, as you see, alone by myself all day; and this over and beyond the failure of his duty on the part of the landlord."

Now Joanni saw nothing of the snare which lay hidden beneath these words; so, in order to appease him and to show himself willing to do aught which would gratify him, he said: "Is there anything you want, for we too all hold ourselves as being bound to serve you?" To this Messer Ambrosio replied: "And I look upon you as my brothers; but it happens to-day that I am in want of a little sauce or relish which is called mustard; indeed, I am in such a humor this morning that I could not eat roast meat without some of the same therewith. One of my servants knows the place where they sell it at a fair price and good in quality—somewhere, I think, in the old market. Now, seeing that I have no one here to send for this mustard, how can I be otherwise than angry with my servants on account of this fault of theirs?" Joanni had already begun to be somewhat out of humor with himself with regard to the offer of service he had made, for he would assuredly have felt monstrously ill at ease at leaving his wife alone for so long a time. Wherefore, without making any other proposition, he kept his tongue between his teeth. Messer Ambrosio, seeing the course things were taking, turned toward Joanni and spake thus: "Ah, my good maestro, if the task will not be very irksome to you, I beg you that you will go fetch for me this sauce, and by the time you shall have come back our dinner will be ready."

Poor Joanni as he listened was mightily ill-pleased, but it seemed to him that he would be behaving in an unseemly fashion were he to refuse to do so slight a service. And again he searched his brains in vain for any plausible excuse he might advance why he should take his wife along with him. Wherefore, not being able to hit upon any safeguard other than the help of his gossip, he went up to him and in a whisper recommended the young scholar to his care; and then, having taken from the table a sauceboat, he flew as quickly as he could to fetch

the sauce. The cavalier, as soon as he saw that he was gone, turned toward the gossip who had been left on guard, and cried out: "Alas! after all I have forgotten the best part of what I wanted to tell him." Said the gossip: "And what do you still want?" Then the cavalier answered: "I wanted some oranges, but in my rage I quite forgot to tell Joanni of my need." The other replied, deeming the request to be made in good faith: "I myself will go and fetch you some forthwith, for as it happens I have some of the finest oranges in the world at my shop, which were brought to me yesterday from Salerno."

Having thus spoken, he forthwith went on his errand; whereupon Messer Ambrosio, being left alone with the young woman, and thinking there was no time to be lost, took her by the hand, and said. "And now, master physician, I am minded to tell you privily concerning a certain ailment with which I am troubled." Then, having led her aside into a chamber and taken her up to the bed which was therein, after that weak demur and resistance which those whose desire is solely toward practise of this kind are accustomed to put forward, they made upon the swiftest wings of desire a flight of supremest rapture, and scarcely was this finished when the gossip came back with the oranges. Finding the chamber door locked, he marveled greatly within himself thereat, and having put his eye to a chink which he discovered, he beheld the cavalier, after he had taken his pleasure with the young woman, holding her in his arms, and giving her many secret and tender kisses. This thing which he saw caused him no little trouble, and, having turned himself away with an indignant face, he was assailed with the thought that the cavalier, overcome by nefarious vice, had borne himself lasciviously toward the fair young scholar who had been left in his keeping.

Accordingly he went down to the entrance door,

where he met Joanni; and the latter, not seeing his wife in company with the gossip, at once asked where his brother-in-law, the young scholar, might be, bearing himself the while like a man stunned and almost beside himself. To him the gossip answered in the following words: "Would to God that I had bitten out my tongue this morning, rather than have persuaded you to tarry in this place, forasmuch as I have now no longer any faith in that cavalier with whom you are on such intimate footing. At first, indeed, I reckoned him to be a man endowed with all the virtues, but I have lately discovered him to be as great a villain as ever lived." "Alas!" cried Joanni, "and what may have happened?" The other answered: "May God send him a bad year, forasmuch as this man, putting in practice the same guileful tricks by which he induced you to leave this place, also despatched me to fetch these oranges; and when, on my return, I found him locked in the bedchamber with your brother-in-law, I played the spy upon him through a chink in the door, and found that he was dealing with the young scholar as though with a fair and beautiful woman."

When poor Joanni heard this terrible news, he stood like a man who is neither dead nor alive, overwhelmed with confusion and quite beside himself. In this humor he went upstairs, where he found the cavalier seated at the table, and holding the young scholar in conversation as if nothing out of reason had happened. Then, turning toward him, and carried away by his grief and anger, he said, in a voice broken by sobs: "By my faith, sir, the Milanese courtesy which you have shown toward me has indeed been great. But, seeing that you have been fain to eat the meat without waiting for the sauce, you shall now relish the sauce as best you may without ever again enjoying another taste of such a dish." Then Joanni, having dashed the sauceboat down on the table

and seized his wife by the hand in a tempest of rage, cried: "Get up now, in the devil's name, and let us return home, seeming that we have paid our shot without eating our meat, and I, to make things worse, have brought you the sauce." Then, threatening her with a downright blow, he went his way with her.

The gossip who did not fathom the depth of the inward grief of Joanni, followed him down the stairs and kept on reproaching him that he should have cast so great an ignominy upon so distinguished a man, and all for the sake of a boy. "What can it matter? Do you mean to say you think he will become with child? Well, if it is done, it is done, and what need was there to fall into so grave an error, and to lose such a friend on account of so small an offense." But Joanni, as he made his way with hasty steps, was thinking of naught else than how he might convey his wife back to his house, and for this reason, and because of the fierce anger which was raging within him, he did not trouble to give his gossip a word in reply. The good gossip, however, would not on this account give over his reproaches, but kept on urging him straightway to repair the fault which he had committed on such trifling ground of offense. At last his molestations became more than Joanni could bear, so, all trembling with rage, he spake to his gossip thus: "Alas! my gossip, it will not be any fault of yours if I do not this morning curse God and all those who dwell in the courts of Paradise. Cannot you see that this is my wife?" "But how can that be?" said the other. "Why should you take her about with you in this fashion?" Thereupon Joanni, with plentiful tears, told him the reason why he had acted in this wise.

The gossip, who was a shrewd fellow, first read Joanni a severe lesson for his folly, and then went on to counsel him thus: "My Joanni, you were indeed ill-advised; and, on account of the crazy scheme you fash-

ioned, a heavy and a deserved punishment has fallen upon you. You wanted to jump out of the frying pan and you have fallen into the fire. Alas! my poor fellow! How is it that you were not warned how wicked and corrupt the world is grown in these our days, and that it is much more difficult to keep guard over pretty boys than over women, and especially over such an one as this, who is in truth a lure for these hawks incarnate? In good sooth I have wondered a thousand times this morning that she was not snatched away from your arms. But now that the thing is done, and that you can blame no one thereanent except your own self, I will say that it befell you through your ill luck, and that in the future you had better make use of some other safeguard. If God has given you a woman for a wife it is not meet that you should seek to transform her into a man. I do not say that you should neglect to use whatever guard and precaution may be necessary with a young and beautiful woman, but of a surety you ought not to employ methods so unheard-of and so strange. In the end, forsooth, they will be found of little advantage; for when wives are fully minded to deceive their husbands, there never has been found in human ingenuity any precaution which has availed aught for the frustration of their intention. And be well assured that you are not the first, nor will you be the last, to receive buffets of this kind. Do but take an example from those men of eminent worth who have often fallen into snares like this. These prudently hide their mishaps whenever they can, so as not to add a lasting shame to the grief they feel already."

Thus, with exhortations and arguments such as these, and with divers others to boot, the good gossip went with Joanni as far as his house, pacifying him as best he could, and having left him there—for the reason that he saw no cause why he himself should be counted in

the number of the duped ones—he made his way as quickly as he might back to the inn, where, having found the cavalier in the company of his good friend Tommaso, he joined himself to the party, and they all together made merry over the joke that had been played and over the dinner which had been ordered. Joanni, after long weeping and lamentation, died of grief; whereupon his wife, glad to be rid of him, married again, and tasted all the pleasures which belong to blooming youth without being transformed from her own and most comely seeming.

ARGUMENT

A Lord Cardinal is enamored of a certain lady, and bribes the husband of the same with a sum of money, in order that he may let his wife be brought into the Cardinal's apartment. On the morrow the husband comes to take her back, but the lady being vastly contented with her present lodgment, refuses to accompany him, though he urges her thereto with much fruitless discourse. In the end he takes the money which was promised to him, and in despair goes into exile, while his wife lives a pleasant life with the Cardinal.

I BELIEVE that it is a thing well known throughout the universe, how that most blessed Pope Pius II let summon and constitute a sacred and general council in the city of Mantua, in 1459, in order to set on foot an expedition to be undertaken by all the Christian powers against the Turk. Now the Pope having gone thither accompanied by his whole college of cardinals, awaited the gathering together of the princes and potentates of Christendom whom he had summoned thither in order that he might give his directions concerning all the needful preparations which he was persuading them to adopt for the carrying out of so noble an emprise. It chanced that there was amongst the others a certain lord cardi-

nal, concerning whose name and dignity I will keep silence, who, although he had not yet passed out of his flowering youth to the age which comes after, was nevertheless charged with the execution of the more weighty offices of the apostolic court. In addition to this, he had been endowed by nature with a most comely presence. I will not linger now to tell of the sumptuous apparel he used, or of his fine and richly-decked horses, or of the honorable troop of gentlemen who were in his train, or of the magnificence of his kingly manner of life. And what shall I say concerning his magnanimous spirit, which, being endowed with every liberal virtue, was vastly unlike that of all the others, and in time became most saintly and gracious through its abundance of every grace and gentleness; so that in the end he was accounted to be the most seemly and affable gentleman to be found in any of the chief places of Christendom.

It happened that this same Cardinal took up his abode in a palace belonging to a citizen of repute, round about which there dwelt a vast number of ladies marvelously beautiful in person, and amongst these there was one who, without doubt, outdid all the others of the city in beauty; and she, as fate would have it, was more than once observed by the Lord Cardinal aforesaid, who thereupon felt that he could take pleasure in her and in her alone. Like the mighty hunter that he was, he was powerfully attracted by this fair booty, and determined to leave nothing undone which might help him to come out of this enterprise a victor. And because the house where the young woman dwelt was very near to his own, and the windows opposite to each other, he found on this account abundant opportunity of gazing upon her, and of admiring her loveliness at his convenience.

Now because he received information after a time that this lady was more modest and virtuous than any of her neighbors, and because he found himself unable to

induce her to look upon him even once with kindly eyes, while he used all kinds of gracious arts to commend himself to her favor, he began to feel that the hopes he had hitherto cherished were beginning to forsake him. Still, being fiercely urged on by the pricks of love, and knowing well that difficult undertakings are not to be brought to an issue without sore travail; remembering, likewise, that those objects which men attain with ease have but small savor and quickly pall, he at last fixed upon a certain scheme after he had well canvassed divers others. He determined to see whether he might not be able to entrap the husband of the lady aforesaid by his love of gold, knowing as he did that this man was very needy and very avaricious at the same time. Thus the husband, having been summoned, without any further delay went to him forthwith, and was at once conducted into the presence of the Lord Cardinal in his chamber. After having welcomed him with many words of civil and familiar greeting, the Cardinal made him sit down beside him, and then addressed him in these words: "Sir, as I well know you to be a man of prudent nature, it does not seem to me to be in any way necessary that I should use lengthy speeches and persuasive reasonings in making clear to you a certain matter which you may easily perceive to be one which must make for your lasting peace and contentment, and at the same time enable you to escape both from your present troubles and from those which await you in the future. Wherefore I must let you know that the charm of the great beauty of your most virtuous wife has seized upon me in such wise that I can find for myself no rest on account of the same. I know well enough that by no forethought or reasoning can I bring forward any plea which would permit me to require such a service at the hands of yourself, who are her husband; but when I considered how, for reasons of affection and of upright

dealing as well, no other person would be able to set this affair in order so well as you, or to keep the same a secret from all ears, I made up my mind to have recourse to you, rather than to any other trusty agent, to act as a go-between on my behalf in the matter aforesaid, begging you that for the sake of giving me the satisfaction I so much desire, and for the gathering into your own pockets such advantageous profit, you will deign to grant me this boon which I long for so earnestly. And although the thing I speak of is of so great value and worth that I cannot be said to buy it, nevertheless you must understand that this service I ask of you will not have been given to me for nothing, but sold at a very high price, seeing that I desire no other thing than that your wife should forthwith take full possession of myself and you of all my wealth. Now if it seems good to you to do this thing, I beg you to tell me so without delay and not to keep me waiting, in order that you may straightway perceive what will be the consequences of all the bounty and the rewards which I intend to bestow upon you."

The worthy man was, as I have before said, poor, and besides this avaricious beyond measure; wherefore, when he listened to the magnificent offers made to him by the Cardinal, whom he knew well to be very rich and very liberal likewise, he at once considered that assuredly a very great profit must accrue to him from this business, and at the same time persuaded himself most confidently that with his craft he would be able to lay the plot in marvelously subtle and secret fashion. In sooth, the things afore-mentioned sufficed amply to confound his wits, to break through the respect he ought to have felt for the matrimonial tie, to lead him to hold cheaply the good opinion of the world, and to injure with such a disgraceful blow both himself and his eternal happiness. Therefore, without letting his thoughts busy

themselves longer over the affair, he made answer to the Cardinal in a few words: "Monsignor, I hold myself in readiness to do this service you require of me, for the reason that it is your part to command and mine to fulfil your every wish and pleasure."

When the husband had thanked the Cardinal many times for his bounty, he took his leave with a joyous countenance, and, in order to let no long delay interpose before the business should be set in progress, he began on the following night to canvass the same in a very roundabout fashion with his wife, shielding himself as often as he needed behind the pretext of their pressing poverty, concluding his speech by affirming that a dishonest action, if it should be wrought in such cunning wise that no one might be cognizant thereof, may be held not to have been committed at all. The wife, who was a very discreet woman, not only took this discourse of his in excessive ill part, but likewise, being hotly inflamed with anger thereanent, she poured out upon him the vilest abuse, ending by declaring that, if at any future time he should allow himself to think of such a matter, and much less to speak of it, she would without further paltering make it known to her brothers.

The husband did not trouble himself greatly because his wife made so haughty a reply the first time he spoke to her of the affair; and, when he had allowed a few days to pass by, and when a moment fitted for his purpose seemed to have recurred during a conversation with his wife over divers pleasant things, he once more preferred to her in well-considered fashion the same request as he had made to her before. Whereupon she, showing herself more inflexible than ever, went forthwith to the house of her brothers, and with great displeasure told them the whole story of her husband's vile doings, and these, as soon as they heard what she had to tell, were greatly angered and caused their brother-in-law to come

to them and let him know what things they had heard concerning him, threatening him sorely and casting foul words at him on account of the misdeeds he had planned against the honor of them all.

But he, who had already pondered over and prepared the answer he was minded to give, said, without aught of amazement, and even smiling somewhat, "Good brothers of mine, of a truth you might have made inquiry of me with more decorum, and then I might well have taken away all your suspicions, but since one is forced to endure all manner of things when dealing with a number of others joined in alliance, I will tell you the truth concerning the matter which your sister and my wife has related to you. Wherefore you must understand that I, having become suspicious that the cardinal, who has his lodgings over against ours, was seized with an amorous passion for her, and furthermore that he, by the help of certain of my household, had secretly woven a plot against me, made up my mind to try a final experiment in respect to her, holding her, young and fair as she is, to be an honest woman, what though I am somewhat uncertain as to the chastity of women in general. Then, if she should be found honest, as I have always found her, I resolved to praise her thereanent, and to withdraw myself from all suspicious mood both in the present and for the future as well. If, on the contrary, I should have discovered in her any falling away from virtuous carriage, I should have set myself, with your concurrence, to give her such usage as might be meet for her deserts. But now, for the reason that I have, by God's mercy, ascertained and proved her virtue, as you see for yourselves, I have let vanish from my mind all suspicion of any kind, old or new, and from this time forth I shall be careful to treat her with still greater consideration than heretofore."

The brothers, after they had lent ear to this excuse

thus set forth in plausible wise, gave the husband high commendation for the prudent arguments he had used with himself, deeming it quite possible that he might in sooth have done this thing in consideration of the end he anticipated, and, after some further discourse over the affair, they brought about a reconciliation between him and his wife; whereupon she consented to go back with him to his house, holding the belief that he would not again begin to speak to her of such matters as he had lately been in the habit of discussing. The Lord Cardinal, when intelligence was brought to him of what had happened, listened to the same with great bitterness of spirit, for it seemed to him that his glowing hopes were beginning to lose their warmth. Nevertheless, coerced by the fierce passion which possessed him, he still went on courting her with glances more amorous and fervent than ever, and would, now by certain signs and now by spoken words, make offer to her of everything he possessed in the world without imposing upon her restraint or condition of any sort, letting her know in conclusion that for the sake of the love he had for her he was letting himself consume like ice in the rays of the sun.

Now the lady, in sooth, was made of metal which in no way differed from that out of which the residue of the female sex is compounded; wherefore she, notwithstanding that she was in every sense a virtuous and honest woman, began to be conscious of some little tenderness toward him on account of the continual hammering he kept up, but she was careful at the same time to let him get no inkling of her change of mind. Still she never neglected, whenever she might be holding conversation with her husband, to heap commendation beyond measure upon the circumspect manner and the praiseworthy carriage of the Lord Cardinal. Wherefore this discourse of hers chanced to become the reason for the wretched knave of a husband to pluck up his heart

afresh, and to come back once more to ply her with the arguments and persuasions he had used before. Thus, having been careful to seize upon a certain time when he knew her to be in a friendly mood, he addressed her in these words: "My Giacomina, you yourself can truthfully bear witness of the fact that, both in the past and at this present time, I have cordially and truly loved you and still love you on account of the many virtues with which you are adorned. Now if the day before yesterday I demanded of you a certain thing you wot of, I should be unwilling indeed you should still hold the belief that this request of mine was produced by any want of esteem or respect for yourself. Indeed, I was urged on to beg this favor of you against my own pleasure and inclination by two very powerful reasons. The first of these is found in the extreme necessity which has fallen upon us through the working of our evil fortune—an ill for which we are ourselves in no way to blame, and which does not let me see that there is available any other method by which we may keep ourselves alive. The other, which in sooth afflicts me with grief no less bitter, is the thought that in the approaching festival which our marchioness is minded to give for the entertainment of all the various princes who are now gathered together here in our city, and to our neighbors as well, I shall not be able, through lack of money, to provide for your appearance at the same time in such gear and fashion as I should desire, and such as is fitting to our position and to your fine presence and beauty. Thus, when I consider these things in my mind, I find in them such great force, that I suffer myself to be borne along by their arguments, not only to let ensue the affair I named to your hearing, but even to consent to be haled off to eternal torture and a cruel death. And, forsooth, nothing but the fear of consequent shame keeps us back from doing this. Still, as I told you once before, no

enterprise when it is undertaken with caution and foresight can ever come home to us to our prejudice or disgrace. In order that you may be assured that I am speaking the truth, I would have you see that this lord cardinal is so keenly sensible of his own honor and of ours as well that, albeit he is pining away by reason of his passion, he could not bring himself to take any other living man into his confidence as to this affair save myself, seeing that I am the one most concerned in keeping it a secret. Now therefore, not knowing of any further consideration which I might suggest to you concerning this affair, I will bring my words to an end by saying that you must do what your soul counsels you to do, and then I, on my part, will of a surety be contented. Still I will not fail to remind you now, that hereafter, in the hours when we shall be tormented by our wretched poverty, we shall have to let our complaint be made, not to fortune, but to you."

In this fashion was the lady urged and persuaded without ceasing by her wretch of a husband, who, by these fraudulent arguments of his, led her on toward the verge of the abyss. And beyond this she, being fully persuaded that she was loved above everything else in the world by such a gracious, rich, handsome and liberal gentleman, made up her mind that, for the aforesaid reasons and many others to boot, she would forthwith break loose from all the bonds of virtue which had hitherto restrained her, and at one and the same time gain for herself the lasting gratification of her desires, and let her husband feel the prick of that punishment which he was bringing upon himself. And when she marked that he kept silence, she addressed him in these words: "My husband, since it seemed good to my brothers not only to give me to you for your wife in the first instance, but likewise to send me back again to your house contrary to my will after I had departed thence,

having just and ample reason for what I did, and, seeing that we are as we are, I dare not and cannot dispose of myself otherwise than in such manner as all other beautiful women use in dealing with their husbands. By this I mean that we must submit ourselves to our husbands, and obey them as our superiors in all matters. Therefore, as I see clearly that you have in your mind a set purpose to let this person of mine be defiled in the embraces of another man, I will submit in peace to do what you will; that same thing which you have persuaded me to assent to with so many pleas and arguments. Thus I am now fully prepared to do your bidding when and in whatsoever manner you may ordain. Nevertheless, I will not omit to give you warning that it behooves you to give this affair mature reflection, and I will bid you to take care, my husband, that you do not repent thereof in that season when there will remain for you no opportunity of remedying the same."

The husband, when he heard his wife answer in this unusual strain, was mightily pleased, and, deeming that his words had indeed borne fruit, said to her: "My wife, know that people never repent of what is done after due forethought and in order. However, you may safely leave the consideration of all this to me." And with these words he went out of her presence and betook himself with all speed to the Cardinal, and, having given him salutation with a joyful face, thus addressed him: "My lord, the affair is set in order for this very night; but I have assuredly met with a hard task in making her say 'yes,' and I have besides promised her three hundred ducats for this first visit, and of this sum she has instant need in order to exchange the same for fine clothes and ornaments for her person, wherewith to deck herself at the festival which is about to be holden. Wherefore I beg you let it be your special care to send her home well contented."

The amorous Lord Cardinal, who nevertheless was well experienced and very circumspect, understood at once that the baseness of this fellow was as great as he could wish, and made answer that not only would he with the utmost pleasure hand over to him the three hundred ducats, which sum indeed he looked upon as a mere trifle, but that he wished him to have as much money as his pockets would hold. And then, after divers other kindly and courteous words, they came to an agreement one with the other as to the time and the manner in which the husband himself should conduct the lady into the Cardinal's lodging. And when he had returned to his wife he set forth to her an account of what he had settled for her to do, but he could not get her to make any reply thereto save saying, "My husband, my husband, think over and consider well what thing it is you do." And when the appointed time had come for them to set forth she still kept on carping at him as they went on their way with the same discourse: "My husband, I greatly fear me you will repent of what you are after." But he, thinking the while of naught besides the three hundred ducats which he would win for himself in so short a space of time, troubled himself very little thereanent, and even less did he understand the drift of these words of hers, seeing that the passion of avarice had in no small degree blurred and darkened his understanding, and in this wise he led his wife to the Cardinal.

When the young woman had come into the chamber, and when she found herself in the loving arms of so gracious a gentleman, who, besides kissing her times out of number, caressed her over and over again in a fashion which proved the sincerity of his affection, she was seized with the desire, even before they had come to taste together the delicious fruits of love, to confirm herself in the purpose she had already formed, that is, to submit to die rather than to go back to that worthy

husband of hers. Then, when the Lord Cardinal had given to the husband polite dismissal, and had bidden him to return betimes in the morning and take back his wife with him, he entered the soft and luxurious bed with the young woman, and when they had come to that juncture in which love holds out to us his supreme consolation, they wandered all that night in the delightful gardens of Venus overcome by mutual desire. So that the lady, who had never hitherto tasted such a dainty repast, thought within herself that she must assuredly have come to the place where alone the highest bliss was to be found. And for the reason that she had no desire to depart from where she was, she, with discreet manner and with fitting words, made known to the Lord Cardinal what were her wishes, and what course would be expedient for them to take to secure their common contentment and satisfaction, saying in conclusion that, if he should not be satisfied to keep her with him, he might for the future think of her and set her down as lost entirely, and of her husband as being still bereft of her, for she had determined never to return to him.

The Lord Cardinal, who had never before had sense of such sweetness as flowed from these words of hers, and from the purport thereof, before he made her any reply gave her some earnest of his intentions by the many sweet and loving kisses he showered upon her, and at last addressed her in these words: "Sweet soul of mine, in sooth I know of naught else to say to you save that, because I have given to you my very soul, and because you have given your beautiful and delicate body to me, you have only to command and to dispose of me in any fashion which may seem good to you. Whatever you may ordain, I shall be content therewith." Then, after he had turned to her and kissed her again, he bade her get up and put on her attire, seeing that it was by this time broad daylight, and when this was done he let her

be conducted into another room. Having heard that the husband had been there since the dawn in readiness to take his wife with him back to his house, the Cardinal bade a servant bring him hither. The husband, after he had come into the room and seen his wife there, and given her good morning with a smiling face, went privily up to her side and spake to her in the following words: "Ah, my Giacomina, know that I indeed sorely repent me for having brought you to this place, forasmuch as never before have I endured such bitter grief as I have endured this cursed night, wherein I have not been able to sleep at all through thinking of you." The lady, who had already got in order the reply she was minded to give, then said to him: "My husband, I too have been full of regrets, but my regret has been that I did not say 'yes' the first time you proposed that I should come hither, seeing that for the rest of my lifetime I shall never be able to make up for all those delicious nights which I have lost. And if, forsooth, you have slept badly, have I not also been kept awake, albeit most pleasantly, for the reason that my lord here has treated me to more caresses during this one single night than you have bestowed upon me during the whole time I have been your wife. Again I see quite well that through my ill luck in having such a husband as you, this gentleman's liberality, concerning which you discoursed to me in such an ardent tone, has been conferred upon me more than two thousandfold, for you must know that this morning when I made known to him my final resolve to remain entirely with him, he handed over to me at once the keys of all his treasures. And for this reason take whenever you like the price for which you bargained away the honor of our relationship one with the other, and assuredly I wish that this same matter may be the last venture you undertake with regard to me or to any other affair of mine,

seeing that I would vastly prefer to let myself be torn in four quarters rather than return to you."

The wretch of a husband, who now indeed was fain to believe that the very heavens were falling down about his head, answered her in these words: "Giacomina, my fairest one, do you mean to mock me or are you indeed speaking the truth?" She answered him, "Yes, certes, I make a mock of you, and with good cause, too. But you perhaps have made yourself believe that I am now minded to make a trial of your love, after the fashion by which, as you told my brothers, you once sought to put my constancy to the proof. Now I wish that, having made this trial of yours once for all you should rest satisfied with the result of your essay, and that for the future you should look to have nothing further to do with me or my affairs. In sooth, you ought to remember how many times I said to you, 'My husband, have a care of what you are doing,' and to these words of mine you always made answer that I was to leave all such considerations to you. Wherefore I acted in this wise, and thus I intend to act for the future. The thought which gave rise to this thing was your own, and sprang from no other brain than yours, so find a remedy therefor if you can. I, for my part, shall in the mean time, without wasting a single thought over the matter, find myself becoming ever more beautiful and fresh in the delightful embraces of my new lord."

Having spoken these words she opened a cabinet and drew therefrom a purse into which she had shortly before counted the sum of three hundred ducats, and said to her husband, "Here, take the price for the wife you held in such light esteem, and tarry here not a moment longer." Then, as she moved away to go into another room she said, "Now, good-by, my husband, and another time consider well the thing you would do."

Then she locked the door upon him, and never more as long as he lived was a sight of her granted to him. The wretched husband failing to find remedy of any sort for this disastrous barter of his, took the three hundred ducats, so as to make the best of a bad bargain, and overflowing with tears and sighs returned to his home, but being no less terrified by the fury of his brothers-in-law than overwhelmed by the burden of his own shame, he shortly after fled therefrom. How the lady fared, and how she spent the residue of her days in joyance and pleasure, anyone may easily understand.

ARGUMENT

A lady being enamored of a seemly youth causes him to be brought blindfolded into her chamber by a disguised confidant of hers. Then, after having passed the night with him, she directs him to come thither again, but the youth having told his adventure to a friend of his, the lady hears of what he has done, and lets him come to her no more.

During that time when the Pistoian was running from one end of our kingdom to the other and working such a vast number of miracles, the strange accident which is written below verily and indeed came to pass in the city of Naples. The thing happened one Saturday evening in the month of March, when the people were going in a crowd to the church of the Carmine, and amongst them was a bevy of fair ladies, who, having as they imagined received full absolution, were seized with the desire to return to their homes by traversing the outskirts of the city. When they had come to that street which crosses by the Padule, it chanced that they met a band of young men, who were no less remarkable for their grace and beauty of person than for their noble bearing, and these youths, for their diver-

sion and for pleasant exercise, were playing the game of Palla del Maglio. Whereupon it came to pass that a certain one of the ladies aforesaid, endowed with very great beauty and with wit still greater, let her eyes fall upon one of the young men, a youth attired in a doublet of green damask. So strongly was she moved to pleasure at the sight of him that she felt as if she must needs fall into a swoon. Nevertheless she contrived by her prudent carriage to conquer her amorous mood without letting appear any sign thereof, and went back to her home in company with the others, bearing the while in her heart the most overpowering passion for the youth who had so greatly pleased her.

She began at once to run over in her mind all the many and divers methods she could employ whereby she might win for herself full and complete satisfaction of this love of hers; but, although love had now gained possession of the chief place in her heart, she was not yet so completely distraught in her wits as not to know how rarely it happens that anyone who may have resolved to give full rein to amorous passion is able for any long time to keep secret the matter, let the web have been woven ever so privily, forasmuch as there is no one in the world who has not about him some perfect friend or other to whom he is wont to tell the story of all his worthy deeds and his culpable ones as well. Then this same friend will surely possess a like confidant of his own from whom he can in no wise conceal either his own secrets or those of others, and thus, passed on from one mouth to another, the brief felicities of lovers are full often wont to come to an end in long misery.

With regard to this matter you must know that, after long pondering, the lady came to a decision either to let this passion of hers, by the working of a novel stratagem, run on to its full and perfect end, or to withdraw herself entirely therefrom; although, in this latter

case, she might find her desire so powerful that the frustration of it might prove her death. To let the plan she had devised be put forthwith in execution she went to a kinsman of hers in whose fidelity she could trust, and to him she laid bare the story of her passion, and in a few words gave him command to do what she told him. This kinsman who was well inclined to do her bidding, straightway clothed himself in a sack of the sort which the penitents of the confraternity are wont to wear, and this done he went in search of the young man he had been sent to find; and, meeting him by chance apart from the company of his friends, the messenger drew him aside, and, having a piece of cane in his mouth, spake thus to him: "Good brother, if you would meet with an adventure which cannot fail to profit you, see that you be this evening between the first and the second hour in the church of San Giovanni Maggiore." And having thus spoken he went his way.

The young man was mightily astonished when he listened to this request, and, after he had turned over the matter in his mind many times, he came to the conclusion that it must needs be somewhat of weighty import: wherefore, putting full trust in himself, inasmuch as he was young, of high courage and sprightly, and being assured, over and beyond this, that there would be no one at the place aforesaid whom he could suspect of any forethought to work him an injury, he determined, without seeking counsel from any of his friends, that he would go and put his fortune to the test; so, when the appointed hour had come, and when he had taken divers trusty weapons, he went to the place named with a stout heart and full of courage. As soon as he had come to the spot, he saw approaching him the confidant of the lady, who was now clad in a disguise differing from the sack which he had worn in the morning, so that no one would have known him for the same. He greeted the

young man graciously, and, speaking in a low tone so that his voice might not betray who he was, he said: "My friend, it seems to me that kindly Fortune now approaches you, offering you the highest favors for your lasting gain as well as for your present and future contentment, if you will only show yourself wise, and give her joyful welcome. The fact is that a certain lady, young, beautiful, and beyond measure rich, is so mightily enamored of you that she is altogether distraught and consumed by her passion, and has finally resolved to offer you the boon of taking the first fruits of enjoyment of her person before any other man, and of partaking of her wealth as well. Nevertheless, she is minded, in order that she may for a few days have experience as to whether you know how to bear yourself with silence and secrecy, that you should enter her presence with me veiled in such wise that you can gather no cognizance of herself, or of her house, or of the quarter in which she dwells. If you will consent to do this, let us at once set out on our way; but if by any chance the good fortune which now calls you, without putting upon you aught of labor or trouble, should not seem to your liking, you may go your way in God's name, for I am strictly charged not to bring you except of your own free will."

The young man, when he first heard the gist of the speech aforesaid, deemed that the enterprise would be a difficult one, and it would moreover be a strange thing to be led away thus blindfolded, almost as if he were a goat being taken to the shambles; still, when he considered that he need fear no peril to his person, seeing that the man before him had left to him the choice to go or to stay, and reckoned that beyond this there could follow naught which would not prove to be advantageous to him, he determined, without further thought thereanent, to risk the adventure, and made answer to

the messenger that he was ready to go with him wherever and in whatsoever fashion it pleased him. Whereupon the other brought out a thick veil, and, after he had covered the young man's eyes and drawn off his biretta, he took him by the arm, and the two set forth on their way. He led the youth on from one street to another; they entered divers houses and issued therefrom again; and when at last it seemed to him that the time had come, he led the gallant into the lady's house. Then, after he had made him go up and down the divers staircases which were therein several times, he brought him at last into the chamber where his coming was looked for with such ardent longing, and, having removed the veil from his face, he left him there, and locked the door.

The young man, as soon as he opened his eyes, knew naught else than that he was in a dark room in which there was nothing to be seen, but he soon became conscious of a delicious odor which arose from whomsoever might be near him. While he was standing somewhat overcome by amazement at his strange position he felt a woman's arms close round him in joyful wise, and a soft voice spake thus: "Welcome art thou, the sole support of my life!" and without uttering another word she gave him a sign that he should undress, which thing he did readily enough, and then, when she had duly disposed herself, they got into bed together. Now, for the reason that at a time like this neither one of them had any need to speak a word, they occupied themselves in such manner that they lay not idle for a single moment all that night. As soon as the hour drew nigh when the lady deemed that it was meet she should let the young man go forth from her house, she took a purse full of golden florins which she had prepared for this purpose, and, once more embracing him in loving wise, and speaking softly in order that he should not be able to recog-

nize who she was, she said to him: "My sweet soul, take now these few coins, which may be of some use to you for your present need, and leave all thought or care for the future to her who now holds you in her arms. See, moreover, that you bear yourself in prudent wise, and take care lest your tongue, while meaning only to put a slight upon my honor, may not work the ruin of your abiding joy. Indeed, when you may least look for such a thing, I will let your eyes have a feast of what will delight them not a little. But in the mean time think it not a hard thing that you are brought hither in such wise. When I shall be in the humor to receive you again, I will send for you in similar fashion." Then, after she had once more kissed him and had received from him a countless number of sweet kisses, she bade him put on his clothes, and called for her trusty messenger, who once more bound the young man's eyes with a veil, and led him by a devious path to the spot where he had met him on the previous evening, and, having left him there, went back to his own house.

Thereupon the young man, having removed the veil from his eyes, made his way home, marveling amain and rejoicing in heart over what had befallen him. In sooth he was wellnigh beside himself with curiosity to know who the lady might be; and, finding that he could not by his own efforts discover aught, he came to the conclusion that there was no reason why he should keep the story of his great good fortune, and his mental travail over the same, a secret from a certain comrade of his who was his particular and most trusty friend. Wherefore, having sent for him, he told him everything concerning what had recently happened, without taking any further heed as to what he did.

He now began to work in the company of this friend to try to bring to light somewhat concerning his adventure, but for the reason that neither the one nor the

other could in any way hit the mark, they resolved to suffer the business to run on in whatever course should be determined by the lady herself. It chanced that this friend, who was a frequenter of the courts, found himself one day in the company of a number of other lawyers, and, as they were discussing now this argument and now that, he laid before them, point by point, as a strange and marvelous adventure, the case aforesaid just as it had occurred, making believe, however, that the thing had been brought to pass in the kingdom of France. By chance the confidant of the lady, who, as has already been told, had been her agent, and had been cognizant of the whole affair happened to be present when these words were spoken; whereupon he went forthwith to the lady, and, grieving sorely the while, made known to her what thing he had lately heard tell by the mouth of this friend of her lover.

When she heard these words she was stricken with sorrow beyond measure, and held it for certain that, if her lover should go on to act further in this wise, the secret of her hidden passion must needs be brought to light, and her honor and good name tarnished and destroyed. For this reason she resolved, once for all, that the first pleasure and the first boon which the young man had gotten from her should at the same time be the last; and this resolution she forthwith confirmed and settled in her own mind as unchangeable. The improvident youth, unwitting as to what had come to pass, and yearning exceedingly to turn his steps once more toward the pleasant uplands of that rich pasturage, waited for many a day in vain for a summons thither, as vainly as the Jews await that Messiah of theirs who will never come; and, as the days passed without letting him see any sign or token of the coming of the messenger, he learned too late that it was through the working of his own tongue that this evil had befallen him. As for the

lady, although for a season she was sorely stricken with grief over what had happened, we may be sure that she found out before long some safe and convenient method for satisfying her longings with some other lover.

ARGUMENT

Antonio Moro is enamored of the wife of a mariner, and by means of a trick induces the husband himself to take him to have a merry time with the wife. Next, having brought her on board a bark, Antonio lets the husband have his pleasure with her, without knowing who she may be. The husband afterwards pays for a feast; but the thing having become publicly known, he leaves the place through shame; whereupon Antonio and the wife lead a pleasant life together without concealment.

IN the wondrous and most powerful city of Venice there lived a short time ago a gentleman of ancient and noble family, young, of good bearing, and of a merry humor, who was called by name Antonio Moro. Now he, while he abode here in the Kingdom, held me in especial friendship, and, amongst our many other pleasant discourses, he told me the following story as something which in truth befell himself—a story which I propose to write down for your sake and in remembrance of your city, and to let it join the company of the rest I have written.

I will tell you, then, that this Antonio was one day taking his diversion with a certain good friend of his in a boat, as is your custom in Venice, and when the two were crossing from one canal to the other Antonio espied a fair and lovely young woman, the wife of a Slavonian fisherman who was named Marco de Cursola, a fellow who many a time had gone as a sailor on board a great ship which had ploughed divers seas with Antonio for captain. Now the cavalier, being mightily

pleased with her, resolved not to waste time over the business, and straightway sent an old woman, practised in such matters, and on friendly terms with Marco's wife, to have speech with her. And for the reason that the message was no less pleasing to her than had been the sender thereof when she had beheld him the day before, she answered, so as not to keep the messenger long in suspense, that she on her part was ready to do as Signor Antonio willed, but that it seemed to her it would be almost impossible to carry their purpose into effect, because her husband never let her pass a night alone; neither could she receive the cavalier in her house by day, because the neighborhood was so thick with people that not even a bird could fly past unseen. Antonio, when he learned the bent of the young woman's wishes, deemed that the difficulty of the task before him was greatly lessened, and at once set to work by means of a cunning trick to compass what was yet to be done. Having let the young woman be fully advised of all he was minded to do, he caused Marco to be called before him one day when he thought the time was ripe, and, after speaking him soft in his usual way, he besought him to bring his boat in the evening and take him to a certain spot where would be waiting a charming lady who had promised him the boon of her love.

Marco, who was very anxious to do Signor Antonio a favor, replied forthwith that he was ready to do the service required, and having thus settled matters he went his way. When it was night Marco cautiously locked the door on his wife and went to Antonio's house, and, as it was now time to start, they went on board the boat; and Marco, using his oar in the fashion of Venice rowed the cavalier as he had been directed to the canal beside which the old woman dwelt; indeed, the other side of her lodging looked upon another canal in which was situated Marco's hired house. Anyone wishing to

go from the one to the other by water would have perforce to make a long course by going the round; whereas, taking the way by land through the old woman's house, and certain others the owners of which he had bribed, Antonio would be able to go thither easily and speedily. So when they had come to the place, he said, "My good Marco, wait for me here. I will be back in a short time." Then he entered the house of the old woman, and she, who was on the lookout for him, welcomed him gladly, and pointed out the way she had prepared for him. In a few minutes he came to the young woman's door, and this, albeit it was strongly barred, he soon opened with certain instruments handy for the purpose which he had with him. As soon as he found himself with the young woman, who had been awaiting him in high glee, they enjoyed together the full and delicious ending of their amorous desires.

When they had made all plans necessary for their future diversion, Antonio returned to the boat by the same path, and there he found Marco asleep and quite unsuspecting. As soon as the fellow had roused himself and had taken on board Signor Antonio, he turned the boat's prow homewards, and inquired whether Signor Antonio had fared as well as he desired. "Indeed I have fared mightily well," Antonio replied, "and I tell you, my good Marco, that I cannot call to mind the time when I have had so pleasant a bout with a lady; for, besides being young and fair, she was so vastly kind and gracious to me that I know not how I managed to tear myself away from her." Then said Marco: "I doubt not that you had a merry time in getting into port, and while I was waiting I stepped the mast more than once, although I did not spread the sail; for when I figured to myself the pleasure which my good signor was taking with his lady, I felt awakening within me my lustful appetite in such wise that I was within an ace of

setting to work with my oar and going with all speed to take a taste of my own wife. Certes I would have done this had you not told me you were coming back; for had you returned and found me gone, nothing short of a great scandal could have been the consequence."

Antonio, when he listened to these words—what though he was now out of danger—felt no small disquiet at the peril which he had so narrowly escaped, and at once began to consider some other method more diverting even than the one just described, by which he might provide against any such untoward accident in the future. So he said, with a laugh: "My good Marco, I knew not that you had a wife; otherwise I should have bade you go to her, and to come back to the appointed place in the course of an hour." Marco answered: "Did you not know that I only a short time ago took to wife a young and very comely girl?" Then said Antonio: "Indeed I knew it not; but wives, however fair they may be, must be reckoned as part of the regular furniture of the house, something to serve our pleasant uses whenever we may stand in need of the same; wherefore we must always be on the search if we should be fain for some fresh morsel. However, as the thing has thus come to pass this time, we must let it be as it is; but to-morrow evening I hope to bring away with me my ladylove in the boat, as well as a certain companion of hers no less fair and gracious, who will of a surety prove a dainty treat for you." Marco, when he heard this, replied, mightily pleased thereanent, that he would not fail to greet the lady as a man of mettle should.

When Antonio was come to his own house, Marco left him there and went back to his lodging, and, having taken his wife in his arms, he did not forget to make up to her in full measure whatever her gallant had failed to give her through the haste and uncertainty of their foregathering. The next morning Antonio, after

he had let the young woman have full intelligence of what he was minded to do in the evening, sent for Marco at the accustomed hour. Marco meantime had tricked out his boat with carpets and draperies of serge, making therewith an enclosed space at the prow in the shape of a tent. They embarked and set forth, and Antonio, having left Marco at the same spot and told him that he would be back in a trice with the ladies he had spoken of, went to the young woman's door, which he opened in his accustomed manner; and then, when he came into her presence, he spake to her of the danger they had lately incurred, telling her at the same time how he intended to guard against such peril in the future by the precautions of which he had already sent her word. Then, when she had attired herself in a silken garment which Antonio had given her the day before, and veiled her face in such wise that her husband could not possibly have known her, she went with Antonio toward the boat.

Marco, when he saw there was only one lady with his employer, asked where was she who had been promised to him; whereupon Antonio answered that, for certain good reasons, she had not been able to come, adding: "Nevertheless, I do not think of letting you come short to-night; for this one whom I have here will be enough and to spare for both of us, and so you will get your guerdon. When I shall have taken all I want there will still be left more than is needful for you; and, although I do not know your wife, I will be sworn this woman is no less fair and young and dainty than she." Then said Marco: "I can believe that; but meseems it is not meet that I should in any wise lay hands on what is yours." Antonio answered: "I do not look at it thus. If it had not been my pleasure I should have not made offer of her to you, nor would you have presumed to take her. Wherefore get yourself in trim to do what I shall require of you; and for this boon I will ask you

for nothing in return except the price of a fish dinner which I am minded to give to certain friends of mine next Saturday." But Marco was still loath to accept the invitation, albeit Antonio pressed him urgently thereto; but at last they agreed, and Marco promised to give the dinner as a payment for the use of what was his own already.

Then Marco having put out with the boat took up Signor Antonio's lute and began to strum a new tune thereon; and Antonio, having gone with the young woman into the tent, the two together performed to the sweet sound of the music many graceful measures in Trevisan fashion; and when they had taken their fill thereof, Antonio called Marco and said to him in a whisper, "Now take your turn with this pretty prize of ours; but, for the love you bear me, see that you attempt not to find out who she is, for she is of very honorable family, and it was with the greatest difficulty that I persuaded her to come here, even though I told her you were our Doge's nephew." Marco answered, "This matter is the last to trouble me, seeing that I shall not be called upon to marry her." Having thus spoken he went to her in high glee, finding her perfumed with all delicate odors, and taking heed of naught else, or of the fact that she received him with mighty little satisfaction, he did his work in real Slavonian fashion; and when he had rejoined Messer Antonio, he said, "I could not see her face, but as for the rest of her it seemed to me as if I must of a surety be with my own wife, for the flesh and the breath of both are exactly the same; in sooth I am now inclined to give you, not only that dinner of fish, but everything I can call my own." Then Antonio, hugely diverted thereanent, conveyed the young woman back to the place from which he had taken her, and the pair laughed so heartily at having made a cuckold of Marco, fool as he was, that they found it hard

work to stand upright. When they had settled between them all that was needful for their future enjoyment, Antonio went back to Marco, who was awaiting in a merry mood, and as soon as he had been conveyed to his house he let the boatman return to his wife, who, when he came in, feigned to be mightily disturbed at his long absence, nor was he able to appease her all that night.

On the very next Saturday Marco prepared a fine dinner of fish in Antonio's house, and, as the last-named did not wish to play such a joke without companions to witness the same, he bade come certain of his friends, and having told them of the cheat, they all made merry over the dinner which had been prepared at Marco's expense. Then in the course of the feast they began to bandy divers jests, now speaking one by one and now all together, and they threw at poor Marco so many plain-spoken quips that he must certes have comprehended the meaning of the same even had he been one of the wooden-headed sort. And albeit this thing greatly displeased Antonio, who tried by signs and words to make them hold their peace, their merry humor was so greatly tickled by the comical nature of this jest that not even the Doge himself would have been able to impose silence upon them. Then Antonio, remarking that Marco was beginning to be incensed against his wife, having gathered the full meaning of the jests cast at him, forthwith sent a message to her warning her to withdraw from her house. And when Marco returned home and found her gone, he, overwhelmed with grief, went to live at Cursola, and the young woman, remaining with Antonio her lover, made good use of the spring-tide of her life.

ARGUMENT

On a certain night two nuns take their pleasure with a prior and with a priest. This thing coming to the knowledge of the Bishop, he sets himself on the watch and seizes the prior at the gate of the monastery. The priest remains within, and the nun who is with him is made aware that the Bishop is demanding entry. She, by means of a trick, induces the abbess to get out of her bed, and then conceals the priest therein. The Bishop discovers him; the nun remains free of all blame; the Abbess is disgraced, and together with the priest condemned to pay a fine of money.

IN that noble and ancient city, your own Marsico, as perchance may be well known to you already, there is a most famous convent of ladies of the very highest worth and repute, in which, during the year which has just passed, there were no more than ten nuns, all of them in the flower of their youth and adorned with great beauty of person, and at their head an abbess, an old lady of very good and holy life. Now the Abbess, though assuredly she had not let pass in vain her own days of youthful bloom, nevertheless was wont without ceasing to exhort the company of nuns under her care that they ought not, in the flight of time, to spend and to waste the early stage of their life, affirming, with numberless arguments, that there was no grief so sharp as that which arises from the consciousness of time spent in vain, and from making such discovery only when there is available little or no space left for repentance or amendment. And although, considering the excellent disposition of her charges in general, there was no cause for her to weary herself greatly over a matter of this sort, still amongst the other nuns there were two of high family and gifted with marvelous shrewdness of wit, one of whom—although she was never baptized by the name of Chiara—I will nevertheless, by a change of style, call Chiara. And hereby I shall only be giving

her her desert, seeing that she knew very well, whenever occasion might demand, to make clear any business she might have in hand like a wise and discreet damsel. The other I will christen on my own account, and will call her Agnesa. These two nuns, either because they may have been fairer to look upon than any of the others, or perhaps because they were more observant of the precepts and ordinances of their superior, as soon as they perceived that the bishop of the city had, in a very severe and special letter, forbidden the intercourse of their own monastery with any person of whatever sort, made up their minds that they would in no wise submit to any such command, but on the contrary they would, with increased care and scheming, call up all their wits to the task of satisfying their wanton desires, and to employ various and strange expedients therefor.

On this account, letting such thoughts as these rule them, the natural effect followed in due course, so that in a short space of time certain plots of ground, having been well cultivated the while, brought forth abundant fruit in the shape of divers little monks. Thus there was established between these two an indissoluble friendship and perpetual alliance, and so carelessly did they set about wielding the razor, that they seemed rather to be flaying than shaving. Seeing that they took small care to keep these doings of theirs hidden and secret, but let them come to the knowledge of divers people, the whole matter was made known to Messere the Bishop, as to many others. Now it chanced one day that he betook himself to this reverend and holy house, peradventure in order to confirm and strengthen the dwellers therein in well-doing, and, as fate would have it, he too found himself hotly inflamed by the charm and the beauty of Sister Chiara; and, after having laid upon them many commands of his, and certain new provisions, he went back to his house a man differing vastly from what

he was when he had set forth. As soon as he was come there he began to indite billets and to compose sonnets to let his Chiara know, in a few words, how he was altogether consuming away on account of the love he had for her. Chiara, when she had for several days held him in her lures in order to make his passion burn yet more fiercely, and when she had perceived that he had a countenance like the work of an unskilful artist, delineated peradventure after the similitude of one of the earliest of Adam's stock, she made up her mind, once for all, to place his name in her tablets as one to be held in ridicule. Over and above these imperfections, he was miserly beyond all measure—a quality which did not at all commend itself to the grasping claws of Madonna Chiara.

The Bishop having been made aware of this fact, and likewise that he had been gulled by his ladylove; and furthermore that, though she was as bright as a diamond to all the rest of the world, she was as thick as mud to him, took it into his head to learn who might be the gallant upon whom this lady had directed her thoughts; and seeing that he was himself a lover to whom very few roads of this sort were strange ground, he very astutely made an inquiry into the matter, and discovered that the reverend Prior of San Jacobo was wont to take his pleasure with Sister Agnesa, while Chiara would hold high festival with another priest called Don Tanni Salustio, a man of much wealth. Moreover, he ascertained that, for the sake of companionship, these two were accustomed to betake themselves together almost every night to the monastery to find pleasure and contentment with their paramours. Wherefore, having gotten particular knowledge of the affair, the Bishop made up his mind that he would set to work with all possible means to get these two artificers into his hands, not only so that he might famously well pluck out of

them the luxuriant plumes which they carried, but also that he might take vengeance for the insult which had been wrought to himself, a man who had proved to be more fortunate and adept in gaining his bishopric than in winning a way into the good graces of Madonna Chiara. And thus, while he made it his practise to go every night in person, taking with him a troop of ravenous clerical wolves, to the neighborhood of the monastery to carry out as best he could his twofold plan, it happened that on a certain night, when the prior was taking his departure, he stumbled upon the lair of his enemies, and was by them taken in hold. Then, being brought before Caiaphas the high-priest, trembling the while with something else than cold, although he had not yet been questioned as to aught, the thought came into his mind that, by making a charge against his comrade, he might ward off from himself the anger of the Bishop. Wherefore he straightway declared he had come thither to do naught that was blameworthy, but had simply gone into the monastery with Don Tanni Salustio, whom he had just left with Chiara in her cell.

The Bishop, who was not a little gratified in that he had got his hand upon the prior, was at the same time no less eager to capture his companion as well; so, having bound the prior securely and sent him back to his house, he placed in order his artillery, so that he might be able to win an entrance undisturbed into the monastery, and next considered how he might, without risk, lay a firm grip upon Salustio, should such a thing be found possible.

Now Agnesa, who had been in a watchful and suspicious mood since the prior had left her, at once heard sounds outside which told her of his capture, and although she grieved for him from the bottom of her heart, nevertheless, as soon as she became aware how the Bishop was seeking to gain admission to the monas-

tery, she ran with all speed to the cell of Chiara and made known to her in as few words as possible what business was afoot. Chiara, albeit she heard the aforesaid news with the utmost disgust and confusion, being fully aware of how great evil might ensue thereanent, nevertheless, in no way lost heart over the business, but like a shrewd and courageous woman, and reinforced by a sudden counsel of resource, determined upon a way by which she might free herself from the quagmire so full of peril which lay manifest before her. So, having made stand up on his feet the priest, who as luck would have it had already discharged his crossbow more than once, and had made several fine marks on the target, and given him directions to hold himself in full readiness, she betook herself at the top of her speed to the chamber of the Abbess, and calling upon her with a voice trembling with fear, she cried, "Madonna, run, run, for a snake or some other hurtful beast has broken in amongst your young chickens, and is eating them all." The Abbess, being alike old, and one vowed to religion, and a woman, was monstrously avaricious, and, although it irked the old lady greatly to be thus disturbed, nevertheless, in order to defend her own possessions, she quickly threw herself out of bed, and betook herself with the gait of a wolf toward the farmyard where her fowls were kept.

Chiara, who was meantime standing keenly on the watch, when she perceived that her scheme had come to the issue she desired, without further delay haled the priest forth from her cell, and, having taken him by the tail of his shirt—his clothes all bundled round his neck—she led him with nimble steps to the chamber of the Abbess just as if he had been a beast going to the shambles. Then, when she had made him get into the Abbess's own bed, she hurried swift as the wind back to her chamber.

Now almost at this very moment the Bishop with his

band of followers gained an entrance to the monastery, and, having gone into the dormitory, he came by chance across the Abbess, who with a stick in her hand was coming back from the farmyard victorious, though she had found there no serpent. As soon as she saw the Bishop with so disturbed a visage, she said to him, glancing toward him in turn the while, "Messere, what strange doings are these, that I find you here at such an hour?" The Bishop, who by the savagery of his hideous face might well have struck terror into a bear, thereupon turned to the Abbess, and related to her point by point everything that had occurred, saying in conclusion that he was firmly fixed in the determination to lay hands on Salustio, and on Chiara as well, by one means or another. The Abbess, mortally grieved that an accident like this should have happened, and proclaiming her own innocence in the business as well as she was able, made answer that she was ready to satisfy his wishes in every way, and at the same time very well contented with all he had asked. The Bishop, who was very much disturbed in mind at being thus forced to lose more time, forthwith led the way, with the Abbess and his band of assistants following, to the cell of Chiara, and, having come there, they knocked at the door and called out to her that she should open to them forthwith.

Now Chiara in sooth had not slept at all that night; nevertheless, making believe to have risen from her couch all heavy with sleep, without arraying herself completely in her habit, and rubbing her eyes, she came to the door of her cell, and displayed herself in no wise troubled by what had happened, and said, smiling somewhat the while, "What is the meaning of all this array?" The Bishop, now more fiercely inflamed than ever with love of her, and finding her more beautiful than ever when viewed under so searching a light, neverthe-

less, by way of giving her a strong shock of terror, cried out: "Ah! worthless wench that you are, we are come here to deal out to you the punishment meet for those guilty of sacrilege, and you begin to give us your japes and your jokes, just as if we did not know that Salustio has been lying with you this very night, and is, indeed, now inside there." The Abbess, who was a prudent dame, was incited by the ill turn which seemed to have come to Chiara's fortunes; wherefore, before the latter could say a word in reply, she assaulted her with a torrent of injurious words, showing plainly that in her fury she was quite ready to lay hands on her. Chiara, knowing all the while that she had already settled her own bear in the other's lair, answered the Abbess in the following terms, speaking somewhat disdainfully, "Madama, you have come running here in too great a rage against me, and have sought to throw stain upon my good name in a fashion contrary to all honor and duty; but I place my hopes in God and in the glorious apostle Saint Thomas, to whose service we are vowed, and entreat them so to bring it about that Messere shall not go forth from this place until he shall have gained clear and open knowledge of my innocence, and of another's guilt. Indeed, he who delivered Sussanna from the false accusation of those villainous elders, will likewise deliver me from this infamy which is now cast upon me." And having thus spoken, with feigned tears and much show of anger, she went on to say, "Ravening wolves as you are, come into my cell according to your habit." The Bishop, who was fully satisfied in his mind that the priest was indeed within, by a quick movement entered the room with all his followers, and searched every part thereof so narrowly that they left unvisited no corner in which even a hare could have hidden itself, but by no amount of searching could they find him whom they wanted to find. Wherefore

the Bishop, having left the cell full of wrath and anger, cried out: "In good faith, we will leave no spot unsearched till we find him." The Abbess, so as they might make inquisition of the cells of all the nuns, cried out: "Sirs, in God's name search every place, and make a beginning in my own chamber." And in the same strain spake all the other nuns, who had run together to the spot on hearing the uproar which was being made.

Since the Bishop seemed inclined to entertain this suggestion in the sense in which the Abbess spoke, he straightway gave orders to two of his own followers to enter at once the chamber of the blameless Abbess, directing them at the same time that they should only make a pretense of searching the chamber, as a place in no way to be suspected, in order that they might quickly be able to come to the other apartments. Whereupon they at once entered the room, and marking that the surface of the bed showed that someone was beneath, they at once decided within themselves that there must be a man therein; so, having drawn back the clothes, they found there the wretched Salustio half dead. As soon as they recognized who the man was, they fastened upon him like so many hounds of the chase, at the same time crying out "Ecce homo." As soon as the noise of this hurlyburly came to the ears of the bishop, he quickly made his way into the chamber with as many of his men as yet remained with him. Everyone will easily be able to judge for himself how completely overcome with amazement they all must have stood, when they thus came upon the priest, clad only in his shirt, lying in the bed of the Abbess, and more especially to figure the grief-stricken and betrayed Abbess herself, who, standing as if she had been thunderstruck and stupefied by this dire calamity, seemed to all those who looked upon her to be in sooth dead. She searched her memory, and was sure that no such man was in the

bed when she had left it. Neither did she know whether this spectacle which she saw was to be reckoned as a dream, or as the truth, and it seemed to her that it was alike forbidden to her either to deny or to acknowledge this thing as real.

Madonna Chiara, as soon as she saw how the defense she had devised had been brought to serve as a remedy, and had come to the issue she desired, now dared, without taking much heed to what she said, to let burst forth over Messere the Bishop, and over the poor beguiled Abbess as well, a torrent of unseemly and monstrous words, saying, amongst other things, "By God's cross, I will send word to-morrow to my kinsfolk to bid them come and fetch me out of this public brothel, where priests are wont to come at night and to be found in the very bed of the woman whose bounden duty it is to hold up a good example to the others of the monastery. Hag of Satan! would that fire might fall down from heaven, and by a miracle take her away from the face of the earth!" And uttering these words, and others of a like nature, she betook herself to her cell, and, angered amain, made fast the door thereof, leaving without the Bishop and all the others overcome with amazement. The Bishop, his rage now transformed into the deepest shame and grief, turned upon the wretched woe-begone priest, and made his followers quickly tie his hands and legs as if he had been a thief. Then, without saying another word by way of farewell to the grief-stricken and disgraced Abbess, or to the other nuns, he went home to his house.

On the following morning, after he had considered the institution of a trial which should set to work to condemn both the prior and the priest to the flames, he made it appear to them, by the means of certain good friends, that he had abated somewhat the fury of his rage, and accordingly the fire, which, together with

divers other dreadful torments, he was anxious to heap upon these sacrilegious sinners, became something vastly different through the working of the greedy humor of San Giovanni Bocco d'oro,* and thus his word proved to be of such great and singular virtue that not only were the peccant clerks freed from the death penalty which they so well deserved, but over and beyond the remission of their sins, there was granted to them plenary authority by means of which they were able to sail at will the seas which they had thitherto ploughed, and likewise over any other sea which might offer itself to their valor, without any penalty whatsoever, because, like true children of obedience, they made to Messere the Bishop an offering of the tenth part which was due from them, in such wise that God ever multiplied their gains from good to better.

Behold, then, my most illustrious lord, in what manner the sagacious Chiara by her ready resource delivered herself out of the snare set for her by Messere the Bishop, and, bringing under censure those who had threatened her with death by fire, came forth unharmed from her perilous situation.

ARGUMENT

A young girl is beloved by many suitors, and whilst feeding them with hope, cozens them one and all. One of these pursues her more closely than the others. She, however, has criminal converse with a slave of the house, who lets this thing be known to the lover. Whereupon she dies of grief, and the young man, having purchased the slave, lets him go free.

ACCORDING to a report which I once heard from the mouth of a merchant of Ancona, there lived in that

*The sum of money given for a bribe, or bribery in general.

city not a great while ago a very rich merchant, well known all through Italy, who had an only daughter named Geronima, very young and beautiful, but vain beyond measure. Now this damsel, who thus gloried herself overmuch on account of her beauties of person, was firmly set in the belief that the greater the number of lovers she might each day bind to her service the greater would be the price at which her beauty would be appraised. For this reason she not only kept fast bound to her all those whom she had already ensnared, but she turned her thoughts to no other aim than to devise plans for the capture of still more victims by new arts of beguilement. So, without letting any one of them ever have a taste of the supreme fruit she held in store, she fed them with wind and leaves and flowers, but she never suffered one of them to go out of her presence altogether void of hope.

And while she went on priding herself over this game of trifling, it chanced that a certain youth of a very noble house, of a comely person and well endowed with all the virtues, applied himself with keener ardor than any other of the suitors had put forth to the task of winning this finished artist in coquetry. In sooth, he let himself be borne away so far into the depths of the sea of love that, notwithstanding the difference and disparity of their several estates, he would assuredly have taken her to wife if it had not been that he, being a poor man, deemed that others would have held him worthy of censure for that he, out of meanness of soul or greed of wealth, had thus made a market of his ancient nobility. Nevertheless, the father of the young damsel aforesaid plied him with importunity without ceasing, setting before him how great would be the profit and advantage which must accrue to him through an alliance of this sort. But the young man, albeit he did not look upon any of these proposals with

favor, contrived nevertheless with great ingenuity to keep the business in suspense, so that he might determine whether he might not by a cunning trick bring this scheme to a successful issue. Thus, having planned to enter into relations with some one or other of the household of the young girl, he found that the only one of the servants he could use for this purpose was a certain black Moor belonging to her father, a youth named Alfonso, and for a Moor not ill-looking. He was wont to go about with a stout strap, and let himself out at a price, to carry burdens on his back for whomsoever might have need of his services.

Now the young man, under the pretense of employing this fellow for some errand, would often let him come to his house, treating him with much kindness and caressing, giving him plenty of good things to eat and money to spend on his pleasures, alluring him in such wise that in the end Alfonso became more devoted to him than to his rightful master. Then, as soon as the young man was fully assured that he might trust the Moor, he began to ask him to speak fair of him in the damsel's hearing; and, continuing to discourse in the same strain, he said one day, "My good Alfonso, if in sooth there be any man in the world of whom I am envious, it is of you; forasmuch as fortune gives you free leave to behold and to address your mistress whensoever you wish." And with these and with other very passionate words he went on without ceasing, tempting the slave to listen to him and to do him the service he desired. Wherefore the Moor, who was indeed in no wise lacking in wit and caution, and who was likewise in a measure cognizant of his master's intention to make a match between this young man and his daughter, determined that it would be a grievous waste if such a worthy and well-mannered gentleman as this should, under the name and guise of matrimony, be entangled

in toils so fraudulent. So one day in his ill-wrought speech he bade the young man to lay aside entirely this love of his, for the reason that Geronima was a most evil-minded girl, and that he himself had many a time had intercourse with her, having done this thing rather by compulsion than of his own free will. When the poor young lover heard spoken such monstrous words as these, it seemed to him as if his soul was taking its flight from his body; however, collecting his wits somewhat, he put to the Moor many narrow and searching questions, only to find himself more clearly convinced, especially as Alfonso in the end offered to let him see the fact for himself, and as it were to touch it with his own hand—a proposition which he most readily accepted.

In order to carry out this scheme without letting waste any long time over the same, he caused to be made for himself forthwith a strap or band exactly similar to that worn by the Moor, with a certain device thereto by means of which he could put it on or take it off at will in such wise as is the habit of porters. On that same night, when he had determined to betake himself to witness the monstrous spectacle which was to be shown to him, he went to a painter who was his friend and had himself painted black from head to foot, and then, when he had put on certain rags which belonged to the Moor, together with the porter's band, and had changed himself in his carriage and in every other necessary respect, no one would have taken him for aught else than a real porter. As soon as it was nightfall he was led by Alfonso into the merchant's house, and was furthermore made to lie down on a mean, dirty bed. Then the Moor, after he had given full information as to the wonted doings of the abandoned girl, went his way to sleep in the stable.

The young man had not waited a great time before he heard a sound which told him that the door of the place

where he lay was being stealthily unfastened, and when it was fully opened he saw and recognized Geronima, the damsel whom he had loved beyond all others, enter the place, bearing a little candle in her hand and glancing on every side to see whether peradventure some other one might not have come into the room. But when she saw that, according to her belief, there was no one else therein except her Alfonso, she went close beside the bed, and, remarking that he was black and suspecting nothing, she quenched the light and lay down by his side, and began straightway according to her wont to awake the sleeping beast.

The wretched lover, when he saw things had so fallen out that, in order to accomplish what he had hitherto desired beyond aught else, he must needs have his heart wrung with grief—when he discovered that his lover's anguish had shaken his manhood in such wise that he would vainly attempt the end he had looked to attain—was several times on the point of letting it be known who he was, and assailing the unparalleled wickedness of the young girl with unbounded and scathing rebukes. But after carefully considering the affair, he reckoned that he would not himself get full satisfaction from the adventure, except it should be duly brought to its appointed issue, and except the damsel should in the end be left by him covered with shame and grief and sorrow. Whereupon he determined once for all to put compulsion on his humor, chilled as it was by grief and indignation, and then by a punishment of the sort aforesaid, to work vengeance upon the girl, not only on his own account, but likewise on account of all the many others who had been befooled and flouted by her. So with no slight difficulty he brought to completion the course he had resolved to pursue. And when he had done this, he began to address her, his indignation raging strong and fierce as ever, in the following words: "Ah, foolish,

insensate, profligate wretch, headstrong and insolent beast that you are! Where are now all the charms with which you were wont to trick yourself out? Where is now your pride, you who deemed yourself fair beyond all others, and imagined in your haughtiness that, with the aid of this and of your wealth, you could touch the very heavens with your head? Where are those broods of ill-starred lovers of yours, wretches whom you fed with false hopes, while every day you mocked and derided them? Where is now that foolhardy insolence which led you to seek to get me for your husband? What manner of flesh was it you were minded to give me for my enjoyment? Was it the same which you had already given as a meet repast to a black carrion crow, to a filthy porter, to a savage hound, clad in vile rags and loaded with chains? As you must of a certainty be aware, I have ever been careful how I might with all manner of artifices deck out my person with divers fine garments, and use pleasant odors, solely with the desire of exhibiting myself in your sight in fashion which would please you; but, finding that naught I could do proved of any avail, I bethought me of putting on this dress, the habit of the basest menial, in which you saw me when you first came in. Of this you assured yourself by examining me closely with a lighted candle, and were no doubt mightily pleased with what you thought you had found. And afterwards I, as you yourself must know well, found it no light task to labor in the field which by right belongs to this Moor. Before this you will, I doubt not, have discovered by the sound of my voice that I am the man whom you have befooled and fed with wind for these many years past by means of your wheedling looks. Moreover, it grieves me to think that you, beguiled by holding me so completely under your yoke, may have been able to boast in the past that you had bettered your former condition a

hundred thousandfold; though, indeed, you may now set this down as your last bit of good fortune, for be assured that I would rather let myself be cut in quarters than ever again admit that you are worthy of being mated with myself. Nor need you flatter yourself that you will be able, as heretofore, to quench your hot lust in the arms of your beloved Moor; for it is by his hand that I now find myself unshackled from the bonds which your lures have cast around me, and as some reward for the great service he has wrought me I have determined to make a free man of him and release him from the servitude he owes to your father. And if you should ever henceforth take it upon yourself to dupe or to feed with false hopes any goodly youths in such fashion as you have befooled them in the past, or to put your flouts upon them anew, be well assured that this scheming of yours will be balked, forasmuch as I myself will set to work to let this abominable wickedness of yours become the public talk in every part of this our city, and I will make your name the byword in the mouths of the common folk, and thereby let eternal disgrace fall upon you. In sooth, I shall never deem that I have vituperated you enough for the vile and wicked profligacy you have practised. But these rags which I now wear, and the clothes upon this bed—which have been to you heretofore so gracious and sweet-smelling and pleasant—stink in my nostrils so so horribly that I am constrained to go my way forthwith; therefore get you gone quickly hence, and on your way call for me your worthy lover, who is waiting in the stable, in order that he may convey me privately out of this dark prison in which I am not inclined to tarry any longer.”

The woebegone and most wretched Geronima, who indeed knew full well who was the man she had with her the very first word he spoke, would assuredly have

made an end straightway to her miserable life had a knife meet for such a deed been in her hand. All the time he was speaking, she, without giving him back a single word in reply, went on with her bitter weeping, and at last, according to his command, she got up from the bed and called the Moor in a soft voice. Then, as the young man wished, she let them both out of the house, and after she had locked the door she returned to her own chamber, and there, under the color of some excuse, she thenceforth remained grief-stricken to death, and shedding as many tears as a well full of water would have supplied. In a few days' time she died, whether by grief or by poison I know not. The noble youth, having let the whole affair get noised abroad, and having likewise enjoyed no small pleasure for the punishment and death of the young girl, purchased the Moor and set him at liberty. He himself, now that he was delivered and unfettered from his passion, lived happily for a long time, taking much pleasure in his lusty youth.

**FIVE FABLES
FROM THIRTEEN MERRY NIGHTS**

**BY
GIOVANNI STRAPAROLA**

(Died in 1557)

GIOVANNI FRANCESCO STRAPAROLA was born near the end of the fifteenth century, although the exact date is unknown. He wrote many sonnets, short novels, and letters, but is known chiefly by his famous collection of stories entitled *Tredici piacevoli notti* ("Thirteen Merry Nights"), taken from many sources and published in Venice in 1550. Many editions were published thereafter, and writers of other nations have been indebted to him for many of his ingenious ideas. He was born in Caravaggio, near Cremona, and died in 1557. The *Fables* are supposed to have been related by a party of ladies and gentlemen enjoying a fortnight's visit at the country-seat of one of the party.

ARGUMENT

Filenio Sisterno, a student of Bologna, having been tricked by certain ladies, takes his revenge upon them at a feast to which he has bidden them.

IN Bologna, the chief city of Lombardy, the parent of learning, and a place furnished with everything needful for its high and flourishing estate, there lived a young scholar of graceful and amiable parts named Filenio Sisterno, born in the island of Crete. It chanced one day that a magnificent feast was given, to which were invited the most beautiful and distinguished ladies of Bologna, and many gentlemen, and certain of the scholars, amongst whom was Filenio. After the manner of gallants, he went dallying now with this and now with that fair dame, and finding no difficulty in suiting his taste, resolved to lead out one of them for a dance. His choice fell upon the Signora Emerentiana, the wife of a

certain Messer Lamberto Bentivogli, and she, who was very gracious, and no less sprightly than beautiful, did not say him nay. During the dance, which Filenio took care should be very gentle and slow, he wrung her hand softly, and thus addressed her in a whisper: 'Ah! Signora, how great is your beauty; surely it transcends any that has yet met my eye; surely the lady does not live who could ensnare my heart as you have ensnared it. If only I might hope you would give me back the like, I should be the happiest man in the world; but if you should prove cruel, you will soon see me lying dead at your feet, and know yourself as the cause of my bane. Seeing that I love you so entirely—and indeed I could do no other thing—you ought to take me for your servant, disposing both of my person and of the little I can call mine as if they were your own. Higher favor from heaven I could not obtain than to find myself subject to such a mistress, who has taken me in the snare of love as if I had been a bird.' Emerentiana, while she listened earnestly to these sweet and gracious speeches, like a modest gentlewoman made as though she had no ears, and held her peace. When the measure had come to an end, Emerentiana sat down, and straightway Filenio led out another lady as his partner, but the dance had scarcely begun before he began to address her in like fashion: 'Of a truth, most gracious Signora, there is no need for me to waste words in setting forth how deep and ardent is the love I have for you, and ever shall have, so long as this soul of mine inhabits and rules my unworthy frame. And I would hold myself blest indeed if I could possess you as the lady of my heart and my peculiar mistress. Therefore, loving you as I do, and being wholly yours, as you may easily understand, I beg you will deign to take me for your most humble servant, seeing that my life and everything I have to live for depends on you and on no other.'

The young lady, whose name was Panthemia, although she understood all this, made no reply, but modestly went on with the dance, and, when it had come to an end, she sat down with the other ladies, smiling a little the while.

But short time had passed before the gallant scholar took a third partner by the hand; this time the most seemly, the most gracious, and the fairest lady in Bologna, and began to tread a measure with her, making all those who pressed round to admire her, give way; and before the dance was ended he thus addressed her: 'Most estimable lady, perhaps I shall seem to you out of measure presumptuous to reveal the secret love which I have borne, and still bear toward you, but for this offense blame not me, but your own beauty, which raises you high above all others, and makes me your slave. I speak not now of your delightful manners, nor of your surpassing virtues, which are great enough and many enough to bring all the world to your feet. If then your loveliness, the work of nature, and owing naught to art, fascinates everyone, there is no wonder that it should constrain me to love you and to guard your image in my inmost heart. I beseech you then, sweet lady, the one comfort of my life, to spare some tenderness for one who dies for you a thousand times a day. If you grant me this grace I shall know I owe my life to you; so to your kindness I now recommend myself.'

The fair lady, who was called Sinforosia, when she heard the sweet and loving words which came from Filenio's ardent bosom, could not forbear sighing, but taking heed of her honor as a married woman she answered him naught, and when the dance was come to an end returned to her seat.

It happened that all these three ladies found themselves sitting in a ring close to one another, and dis-

posed for sprightly talk, when Emerentiana, the spouse of Messer Lamberto, moved by jocund humor and not by spite, said to her two companions, 'Dear friends, I have to tell you of a diverting adventure which has this evening befallen me.' 'And what is it?' they inquired. Said Emerentiana, 'This evening, in the course of the dancing, I have gotten for myself a cavalier, the handsomest, the trimmest, the most gracious you could find anywhere, who protests himself to be so hotly inflamed with my beauty that he can find no rest day or night.' And word by word she related all that the scholar had said to her. As soon as Panthemia and Sinforosia heard her story, they told her that the same had happened to them, and before they left the feast they had satisfied themselves that it was the same gallant who had made love to all three of them. Wherefore they clearly comprehended that the words of this gallant sprang not from loyal feeling, but from deceit and feigning of love, and they gave to them no more credence than one is wont to give to the babblings of a sick man or to the romancer's fables, and they did not go from thence before they had agreed, each one of them, to put a trick upon him such as he would not readily forget; for ladies, too, may play jokes. Filenio meantime was bent on an amorous design, and went on making love, now to one lady now to another. Judging from their carriage that they looked not unkindly upon him, he set himself the task, if it were possible, of moving each one of them to grant him the supremest favor of love, but the issue of the affair was not according to his desire, for all his schemes went astray.

Emerentiana, who could no longer bear with the mock love-making of the silly scholar, called to a pretty buxom handmaid of hers, and charged her to find some excuse for speaking with Filenio, in order to disclose to him the love which her mistress had conceived for him,

and to let him know that he might whenever he would spend a night with her in her own house. When Filenio heard this he was much elated, and said to the maid, 'Hasten home forthwith and commend me to your mistress, and tell her in my behalf that she may expect me this evening at her house, provided that her husband be not at home.' When this word had been brought to Emerentiana, she straightway caused to be collected a great store of prickly thorns, and having strewn these under the bed where she lay at night, she awaited the coming of her gallant. When it had become dusk the scholar took his sword and stole toward the house of his fancied mistress, and the door, when he had given the password, was immediately opened. Then, when the two had held some little converse and supped daintily, they withdrew into the bedchamber for the night.

Scarcely had Filenio taken off his clothes to go to bed when Messer Lamberto was heard without, and hereupon the lady, feigning to be at her wits' end where she should hide her lover, bade him get under the bed. Filenio, seeing how great the danger was, both to the lady and to himself, made haste to betake himself thither, without putting on any more clothes than the shirt he wore, and was in consequence so grievously pricked by the thorns prepared for him that there was no part of his body, from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, which was not running with blood. And the more he essayed in this dark hole to defend himself from the pricks, the more grievously was he wounded, and he dared not make a sound lest Messer Lamberto should hear him and slay him. I leave you to figure in what plight the poor wretch found himself that night, seeing that he dared not call out, though he was like to lose a good part of his breech through the torment he was suffering. When the morning was come, and the husband had left the house, the wretched scholar clothed

himself as best he could, and made his way back to his lodging, bleeding and in great fear lest he should die. But being well treated by his physician, he got well and recovered his former health.

Many days had not passed before Filenio essayed another bout of lovemaking, casting amorous eyes on the other two ladies, Panthemia and Sinforosia, and went so far as to find one evening an occasion to address Panthemia, to whom he rehearsed his continued woes and torments, and besought her that she would have pity upon him. Panthemia, who was full of tricks and mischief, while feigning to compassionate him, made excuse that it was not in her power to do his will; but at last, as if vanquished by his tender prayers and ardent sighs, she brought him into her house. And when he was undressed, and ready to go to bed with her, she bade him to go into a cabinet adjacent, where she kept her orange water and perfumes, to the intent that he might well perfume his person, and then go to bed. The scholar, never suspecting the cunning of this mischief-working dame, entered the cabinet, and having set his foot upon a board unnailed from the joist which held it up, he and the board as well fell down into a warehouse below, in which certain merchants kept their store of cotton and wool, and although he fell so far he suffered no ill. The scholar, finding himself in this dark place, began to search for some ladder or door to serve his exit, but coming upon none he cursed the hour and the place where he had first set eyes on Panthemia. The morning dawned at last, and then the unhappy wight began to realize by degrees the full treachery of Panthemia. He espied on one side of the storehouse certain outlets in the wall, through which streamed in a dim light, and, finding the masonry to be old and moss-grown, he set to work with all his strength to pull out the stones in the spot which had fallen most to decay,

and soon made a gap big enough to let him out. And, finding himself in an alley, clad only in his shirt, and stockingless, he stole back to his lodging without being seen of any.

And next it happened that Sinforosia, having heard of the tricks which the two others had played the scholar, resolved to treat him with a third, no less noteworthy; so, the next time she saw him, she began to ogle him with the tail of her eye, by way of telling him that a passion for him was burning her up. Filenio, forgetting straightway his former mishaps, began to walk up and down past her house, and play the lover. Sinforosia, when she saw from this that he was deeply smitten with love for her, sent him a letter by an old woman to let him know that he had so completely captured her fancy by his fine person and gracious manners that she could find rest neither night nor day, and to beg him that, whenever it might please him, he would come and hold converse with her, and give her a pleasure greater than any other. Filenio took the letter, and having mastered the contents, was at once filled with more glee and happiness than he had ever known before, clean forgetting all the tricks and injuries he had suffered hitherto. He took pen and ink, and wrote a reply, that, though she might be enamored of him, he, on his part, was just as much in love with her, or even more, and that at any time she might appoint he would hold himself at her service and commands. When she had read this reply, Sinforosia made it her business to find full opportunity for the foolish scholar to be brought secretly to her house, and then, after many well feigned sighs, she said to him: 'O my Filenio, of a truth I know of no other gallant who could have brought me into such plight, but you alone; since your comeliness, your grace, and your discourse have kindled such a fire in my heart that I burn like dry wood.' The

scholar, while he listened, took it for certain that she was melting with love for him, and, poor simpleton as he was, kept on some time bandying sweet and loving words with her, till it seemed to him that the time had come to go to bed to lie down beside her. Then Sinforosia said: 'Before we go to bed it seems meet that we should regale ourselves somewhat.' And having taken him by the hand, she led him into an adjoining cabinet, where there was a table spread with sumptuous cakes and wines of the finest, in which the mischievous dame had caused to be mingled a certain drug, potent to send her gallant to sleep for a certain time. Filenio took a cup and filled it with wine, and suspecting no fraud he emptied it straightway. Enlivened by the banquet, and having washed himself in orange water and dainty perfumes, he got into bed, and then immediately the drug began to work, and he slept so sound that even the uproar of great artillery would scarce have awakened him. Then, when Sinforosia perceived that he was in a heavy slumber and that the drug was doing its work well, she called one of her maids, a strong wench whom she had made privy to the jest, and the two of them took Filenio by the legs and arms, and, having opened the door softly, they placed him in the street, about a stone's cast from the house, and there left him.

It was about an hour before dawn when, the drug having spent its force, the poor wretch came to himself, and, believing that he had been in bed with the lady, found himself instead stockingless, and clad only in his shirt, and half dead with cold through lying on the bare ground. Almost helpless in his arms and legs, he found it a hard matter to get on his feet, and, when he had done so much, it was with difficulty that he kept from falling again; but he managed, as best he could, to regain his lodging and to care for his health. Had it not been for his lusty youth, he would surely have been

maimed for life; but he regained his former health, and when he went abroad again he showed no signs of remembering his injuries and vexations which had been put upon him; but, on the other hand, he bore himself toward the ladies as if he loved them as well as ever, and feigned, now to be enamored of one, and now of another. The ladies, never suspecting malice on his part, put a good face on the matter, and treated him graciously as if they were dealing with a real lover. Filenio was many times tempted to give his hand free play, and to mark their faces for them, but he prudently took thought of the condition of the ladies, and of the shame that would be cast on him should he offer violence to them, and he restrained his wrath. Day and night he considered how he might best wreak his vengeance on them, and when he could hit on no plan he was in great perplexity. But in the course of time he devised a scheme by which he might readily work his purpose, and fortune aided him to prosecute it as he designed. He hired for himself in the city a very fine house, containing a magnificent hall and many dainty chambers, and in this he purposed to give a great and sumptuous feast, and to invite thereto a company of gentlefolk, Emerentiana, and Panthemia, and Sinforosia amongst the rest. They accepted the scholar's invitation without demur, suspecting nothing sinister in the same, and when they were come to the feast the wily scholar led them with many courteous speeches into a room and begged them to take some refreshment. As soon as the three ladies—foolish and imprudent indeed—had entered the room, Filenio locked the door, and, advancing toward them, said: 'Now, my pretty ladies, the time is come for me to take my revenge upon you, and to give you some repayment for all the ills you put upon me, just because I loved you so well.' When they heard these words, they seemed more dead than

alive, and began to repent heartily that they had ever abused him, and at the same time to curse their own folly in having trusted the word of one they ought to have treated as a foe. Then the scholar with fierce and threatening looks commanded them that they should, if they set any store on their lives, strip themselves naked, and the ladies, when they heard this speech, exchanged glances one with the other and began to weep, begging him the while, not only for the sake of love, but also for the sake of his natural gentleness, that their honor might be left to them. Filenio, exulting in his deed, was exceedingly polite to them, but at the same time informed them that he could not suffer them to remain clothed in his presence. Hereupon the ladies cast themselves down at Filenio's feet, and with piteous weeping humbly besought him not to be the cause of so great shame to them. But he, whose heart was now grown as hard as a stone, cried out that what he would do to them was in no sense blameworthy; it was nothing but just revenge; so the ladies were forced to take off their clothes and to stand as naked as when they were born, in which condition they appeared fully as fair as when apparelled. When this had come to pass even Filenio began to feel some pity for them; but, remembering his recent wrongs, and the mortal perils he had undergone, he chased away his pitying humor and once more hardened his heart. He then craftily conveyed all the clothes and linen they had lately worn into a neighboring cabinet, and bade them with threatenings all to get into one bed. The ladies, altogether astounded and shaking with terror, cried out, 'Wretched fools that we are! What will our husbands and our friends say when it shall be told to them that we have been found here slain in this shameful case?' The scholar, seeing them lying one by the other like married folk, took a large sheet of linen, very white, but not fine enough to suffer

their bodies to be seen and recognized, and covered them therewith from head to foot; then he left the chamber, locking the door behind him, to go and find the three husbands, who were dancing in the hall. Their dance being finished, Filenio led them with him into the chamber where the ladies were lying in the bed, and said to them: 'Gentlemen, I have brought you hither for your diversion, and to show you the prettiest sight you have ever seen;' and, having led them up to the bed with a torch in his hand, he began softly to lift up the covering at their feet, and to turn it back so as to disclose the fair limbs beneath it as far as the knees, thus giving the three husbands something wondrous fair to look upon. Next he uncovered them as far as their stomachs, which he then disclosed entirely by lifting the sheet in the same way. I leave you to imagine how great was the diversion the three gentlemen got from this jest of Filenio's, also in what distressful plight these poor wretched ladies found themselves when they heard their husbands join in mocking them. They lay quite still, not daring even to cough, lest they should be discovered, while their husbands kept urging the scholar to uncover their faces; but he, wiser in other men's wrongs than in his own, would not oblige them so far. Not content with this, he brought forth their garments, which he showed to their husbands, who, when they looked thereon, were astonished and somewhat perturbed at heart, and, after examining them closely, said one to another: 'Is not this the gown which I once had made for my wife?' 'Is not this the coif which I bought for her?' 'Is not this the pendant that she hangs round her neck? Are not these the rings she wears on her fingers?'

At last Filenio brought the three gentlemen out of the chamber, and bade them, so as not to break up the company, to remain to supper. The scholar, learning

that the supper was ready and everything set in order by the majordomo, gave the word for everyone to take his place. And while the guests were setting their teeth to work, Filenio returned to the chamber where the three ladies were, and as he uncovered them said: 'Good evening, fair ladies; did you hear what your husbands were saying? They are now without, waiting impatiently to see you. Get up; surely you have slept enough; give over yawning and rubbing your eyes. Take your clothes and don them without delay, and go into the hall where the other guests await you.' With such words as these he mocked them; while they, disconsolate and despairing, feared lest this adventure might come to some fatal issue, and wept bitterly. At last, full of anguish and terror, and looking for nothing less than death at his hands, they arose and turning to the scholar said to him: 'Filenio, you have taken more than vengeance upon us. Now nothing remains but for you to draw your sword and make an end of our lives, for we desire death beyond any other thing. And if you will not grant us this boon, at least suffer us to return unobserved to our homes, so that our honor may be saved.'

Filenio, seeing that he had carried the affair far enough, gave them back their garments, and directed them to clothe themselves quickly, and when this was done he sent them out of the house by a secret door, and they went back to their homes. At once they laid aside their fine clothes, which they had lately worn, and put them away in their presses, and with great prudence sat down to work instead of going to bed. When the feast had come to an end, the three husbands thanked the scholar for the fine entertainment he had given them, and in particular for the sight of the beauties laid out for their benefit in the chamber, beauties surpassing the sun himself, and, having taken leave of him, they returned to their homes, where they found their wives

sewing beside the hearth. Now the sight of the clothes, and the rings, and the jewels, which the scholar had exhibited to them, had made them somewhat suspicious: so each one now demanded of his wife where she had spent that evening, and where her best garments were. To this questioning each lady replied boldly that she had not left the house that evening, and, taking the keys of the coffers wherein was disposed her apparel, she showed this to her husband, with the rings and other jewels which he had given her. When the husbands saw these they were silent, and knew not what to say, but after a little they told their wives word by word what they had seen that evening. The ladies made as if they knew nothing of it, and, after jesting a little over the matter, they undressed and went to bed. And in after times Filenio often met the three ladies in the streets, and would always inquire of them: 'Which of you was in the greatest fear? and did I suffer most from your jests, or you from mine?' But they always held their eyes down on the ground, and said nothing. And in this fashion the scholar avenged himself as well as he could of the tricks he had suffered, without violence or outrage.

ARGUMENT

Messer Simplicio di Rossi is enamored of Giliola, the wife of Ghirotto Scanferla, a peasant, and having been caught in her company is ill-handled by her husband therefor.

ONE cannot deny the gentle nature of love, but love rarely accords a happy issue to the enterprises it inflames us to undertake. And thus it fell out in the case of the lovesick Messer Simplicio di Rossi, who, when he flattered himself that he was about to enjoy the person of the woman he desired so ardently, had to fly from her

laden with as many buffets as he well could carry. All this history I will duly set forth, if, as is your gracious custom, you will lend your ears to the fable I purpose to relate to you.

In the village of Santa Eufemia, situated just below the plain of San Pietro, in the territory of the famous and illustrious city of Padua, there lived some years ago, one Ghirotto Scanferla, a man rich and influential enough for a man in his station, but at the same time a factious, wrangling fellow, and he had for a wife a young woman named Giliola, who, albeit that she was peasant born, was very fair and graceful. With her Simplicio di Rossi, a citizen of Padua, fell violently in love. Now it happened that he had a house which stood not far removed from that of Ghirotto, and he was accustomed frequently to roam about the neighboring fields with his wife, a very beautiful lady, whom however he held in but little esteem, although she had many good qualities which ought to have bound him to her. So great was his passion for Giliola that he got no rest day or night, but he let this passion lie closely hidden in his heart, partly because he feared lest he might in any way arouse the husband's wrath, partly on account of Giliola's good name, and partly for fear of giving offense to his own wife. Now close to Messer Simplicio's house there was a fountain from which gushed forth a stream of water, much sought by all the people round, and so clear and delicious that even a dead man might have been tempted to drink thereof; and hither every morning and evening Giliola would repair, with a copper pail, to fetch water for her household needs. Love, who of a truth spares nobody, spurred on Messer Simplicio in his passion; but he, knowing what her life was and the good name she bore, did not venture to manifest his love by any sign, and simply sustained himself and comforted his heart by gazing now and then upon her beauty. For her part

she knew nothing of all this, nor was she cognizant at all of his admiration; for, as became a woman of honest life, she gave heed to nothing else but to her husband and her household affairs.

Now one day it happened that Giliola, when she went according to her custom to fetch water, met Messer Simplicio, to whom she said, in her simple, courteous way, as any woman might, 'Good morrow, Signor,' and to this he replied by uttering the word 'Ticco.' His thought was to divert her somewhat by a jest of this sort, and to make her familiar with his humor. She, however, took no heed thereof, nor said another word, but went straightway about her business. And as time went on the same thing happened over and over again, Simplicio always giving back the same word to Giliola's greeting. She had no suspicion of Simplicio's craftiness, and always went back to her home with her eyes cast down upon the ground; but after a time she determined that she would tell her husband what had befallen her. So one day, when they were conversing pleasantly together, she said to him, 'Oh! my husband, there is something I should like to tell you, something that perhaps will make you laugh.' 'And what may this thing be?' inquired Ghiretto. 'Every time I go to the well to draw water,' said Giliola, 'I meet Messer Simplicio, and when I give him the good morning he answers to me 'Ticco.' Over and over again I have pondered over this word, but I cannot get at the meaning thereof.' 'And what answer did you give him?' said Ghiretto, and Giliola replied that she had answered him nothing. 'Well,' said Ghiretto, 'take care that when he next says 'Ticco' to you you answer him 'Tacco.' See that you give good heed to this thing I tell you, and be sure not to say another word to him, but come home according to your wont.' Giliola went at the usual time to the well to fetch the water, and met Mes-

ser Simplicio and gave him good day, and he, as hitherto, answered her 'Ticco.' Then Giliola, according to her husband's directions, replied 'Tacco,' whereupon Messer Simplicio, suddenly inflamed, and deeming that he had at last made his passion known to her, and that he might now have his will of her, took further courage and said, 'And when shall I come?' But Giliola, as her husband had instructed her, answered nothing, but made her way home forthwith, and being questioned by him how the affair had gone, she told him how she had carried out everything he had directed her to do; how Messer Simplicio had asked her when he might come, and how she had given him no reply.

Now Ghirotto, though he was only a peasant, was shrewd enough, and at once grasped the meaning of Messer Simplicio's watchword, which perturbed him mightily; for it struck him that this word meant more than mere trifling. So he said to his wife, 'If the next time you go to the well he should ask of you, "When shall I come?" you must answer him, "This evening." The rest you can leave to me.'

The next day, when Giliola went according to her wont to draw water at the well, she found there Messer Simplicio, who was waiting for her with ardent longing, and greeted him with her accustomed 'Good morning, Signor.' To this the gallant answered 'Ticco,' and she followed suit with 'Tacco.' Then he added, 'When shall I come?' to which she replied, 'This evening.' 'Let it be so then,' he said. And when Giliola returned to her house she said to her husband, 'I have done everything as you directed.' 'What did he answer?' said Ghirotto. 'He said he would come this evening,' his wife replied.

Now Ghirotto, though he was only a peasant, was of something else besides vermicelli and macaroni, spake thus to his wife: 'Giliola, let us go now and meas-

ure a dozen sacks of oats, for I will make believe that I am going to the mill, and when Messer Simplicio shall come, you must make him welcome and give him honorable reception. But before this, have ready an empty sack beside those which will be full of oats, and as soon as you hear me come into the house make him hide himself in the sack thus prepared, and leave the rest to me.' 'But,' said Giliola, 'we have not in the house enough sacks to carry out the plan you propose.' 'Then send our neighbor Cia,' said the husband, 'to Messer Messer Simplicio to beg him to lend us two, and she can also let it be known that I have business at the mill this evening.' And all these directions were diligently carried out. Messer Simplicio, who had given good heed to Giliola's words, and had marked, moreover, that she had sent to borrow two of his sacks, believed of a truth that the husband would be going to the mill in the evening, and found himself at the highest pitch of felicity and the happiest man in the world, fancying the while that Giliola was as hotly inflamed with love for him as he was for her; but the poor wight had no inkling of the conspiracy which was being hatched for his undoing, otherwise he would assuredly have gone to work with greater caution than he used.

Messer Simplicio had in his poultry yard good store of capons, and he took two of the best of these and sent them by his body-servant to Giliola, enjoining her to let them be ready cooked by the time when he should be with her according to their agreement. And when night had come he stole secretly out and betook himself to Ghirotto's house, where Giliola gave him a most gracious reception. But when he saw the oat-sacks, standing there he was somewhat surprised, for he expected that the husband would have taken them to the mill; so he said to Giliola, 'Where is Ghirotto? I thought he had gone to the mill, but I see the sacks

are still here; so I hardly know what to think.' Then Giliola replied, 'Do not murmur, Messer Simplicio, or have any fear. Everything will go well. You must know that, just at vesper-time, my husband's brother-in-law came to the house and brought word that his sister was lying gravely ill of a persistent fever, and was not like to see another day. Wherefore he mounted his horse and rode away to see her before she dies.' Messer Simplicio, who was indeed as simple as his name imports, took all this for the truth and said no more.

Whilst Giliola was busy cooking the capons and getting ready the table, lo and behold! Ghirotto her husband appeared in the courtyard, and Giliola, as soon as she saw him, feigned to be griefstricken and terrified, and cried out, 'Woe to us, wretches that we are! We are as good as dead, both of us;' and without a moment's hesitation she ordered Messer Simplicio to get into the empty sack which was lying there; and when he had got in—and was mightily unwilling to enter it—she set the sack with Messer Simplicio inside it behind the others which were full of oats, and waited till her husband should come in. And when Ghirotto entered and saw the table duly set and the capons cooking in the pot, he said to his wife: 'What is the meaning of this sumptuous supper which you have prepared for me?' and Giliola made answer: 'I thought that you must needs come back weary and worn out at midnight, and, in order that you might fortify and refresh yourself somewhat after the fatigues you so constantly have to undergo, I wished to let you have something succulent for your meal.' 'By my faith,' said Ghirotto, 'you have done well, for I am somewhat sick and can hardly wait to take my supper before I go to bed, and moreover I want to be astir in good time to-morrow morning to go to the mill. But before we sit down to supper I want to see whether the sacks we got ready for the mill

are all in order and of just weight.' And with these words he went up to the sacks and began to count them, and, finding there were thirteen, he feigned to have made a miscount of them, and began to count them over again, still he found there were thirteen of them; so he said to his wife: 'Giliola, what is the meaning of this? How is it that I find here thirteen sacks while we only got ready twelve? Where does the odd one come from?' And Giliola answered: 'Yes, of a certainty, when we put the oats into the sacks there were only twelve, and how this one comes to be here I cannot tell.'

Inside the sack, meantime, Messer Simplicio, who knew well enough that there were thirteen sacks on account of his being there, kept silent as a mouse and went on muttering paternosters beneath his breath, at the same time cursing Giliola, and his passion for her, and his own folly in having put faith in her. If he could have cleared himself from his present trouble by flight, he would have readily taken to his heels, for he feared the shame that might arise thereanent, rather than the loss. But Ghirotto, who knew well enough what was inside the sack, took hold of it and dragged it outside the door, which he had by design left open, in order that the poor wretch inside the sack, after he should have been well drubbed, might get out of the sack and have free field to go whithersoever he listed. Then Ghirotto, having caught up a knotty stick which he had duly prepared for the purpose, began to belabor him so soundly that there was not a square inch of his carcass which was not thrashed and beaten; indeed, a little more would have made an end of Messer Simplicio. And if it had not happened that the wife, moved by pity or by fear lest her husband should have the sin of murder on his soul, wrenched the cudgel out of Ghirotto's hand, homicide might well have been the issue.

At last, when Ghirotto had given over his work and

had gone away, Messer Simplicio slunk out of his sack, and, aching from head to foot, made his way home, half dreading the while that Ghirotto with his stick was close behind him; and in the meantime Ghirotto and his wife, after eating a good supper at Messer Simplicio's cost, went to bed. And after a few days had passed, Giliola, when she went to the well, saw Simplicio, who was walking up and down the terrace in his garden, and with a merry glance greeted him, saying, 'Ticco, Messer Simplicio;' but he, who still felt the pain of the bruises he had gotten on account of this word, only replied:

Neither for your good morning, nor for your tic nor your tac,
Will you catch me again, my lady, inside your sack.

When Giliola heard this she was struck silent, and went back to her house with her face red for shame, and Messer Simplicio, after the sorry usage he had received, changed his humor and gave the fullest and most loving service to his own wife, whom he had hitherto disliked, keeping his eyes and his hands off other men's goods, so that he might not again be treated to a like experience.

ARGUMENT

Nerino, the son of Gallese, King of Portugal, becoming enamored of Genobbia, wife of Messer Raimondo Brunello, a physician, has his will of her and carries her with him to Portugal, while Messer Raimondo dies of grief.

GALLESE, King of Portugal, had a son whose name was Nerino, and in the bringing up of this boy he followed such a course that up to the time when he reached his eighteenth year Nerino had never once cast eyes upon a woman except his mother and the nurse who had the care of him. Wherefore when he had come

to full age the King determined to send him to pursue his studies in the university of Padua, so that he might get a knowledge of Latin letters and of the tongue and manners of the Italians as well. And the plan which he had devised he duly carried out. When the young Nerino had come to Padua, he soon acquired the friendship of many of the scholars, and every day these would come to pay their respects to him, one of the above named being a certain Messer Raimondo Brunello, a physician. It chanced one day, as Nerino and this friend of his were conversing now about this thing and now about that, they engaged (as is the manner of sprightly youths) in a discourse anent the beauty of women, and on this subject the former took one view and the latter another. But Nerino, though he had never in time past cast eyes upon any woman save his mother and his nurse, declared with some heat that in his reckoning there could not be found in all the world any lady who should be more beautiful, more graceful, and more exquisite, than was his own mother. And when, by way of putting this speech of his to the test, they brought divers ladies to his notice, he still declared that in comparison to his mother they were little better than carrion.

Now Messer Raimondo had to wife a lady who was one of the fairest nature ever created, and when he listened to this chattering he settled his gorget and said: 'Signor Nerino, I happen to have seen a certain lady who is of such great loveliness that when you shall have beheld her I think it probable you will judge her to be not less but more beautiful than your mother.' To this speech Nerino made answer that he could not believe there could be any woman more lovely than his mother, but at the same time it would give him great pleasure to look upon this one. Whereupon Messer Raimondo said: 'Whenever it shall please you to behold

her I will gladly point her out to you.' Nerino replied: 'I am much pleased at what you propose, and I shall ever be obliged to you.' Then Messer Raimondo said at once: 'Since it will give you pleasure to see her, take care to be present in the Church of the Duomo to-morrow morning, for there I promise you that you shall have sight of her.'

When he had returned to his house, Messer Raimondo said to his wife: 'To-morrow morning see that you rise betimes, and deck carefully your head, and make yourself seem as fair as you can, and put on the most sumptuous raiment you possess, for I have a mind that you should go to the Duomo at the hour of high mass to hear the office.' Genobbia (for this was the name of Messer Raimondo's wife), not being in the habit of going now hither now thither, but rather to pass all her time at home over her sewing and broidery work, was much astonished at these words; but, seeing that her husband's command fell in well with her own desire, she did all she was directed to do, and set herself so well in order and decked herself so featly that she looked more like a goddess than like a mortal woman. And when Genobbia, following the command which her husband had laid upon her, had entered into the holy fane, there came thither likewise Nerino, the son of the King, and when he had looked upon her he found that she was exceedingly fair. When the lady had gone her way, Messer Raimondo came upon the scene, and having gone up to Nerino spake thus: 'Now how does that lady who is just gone out of the church please you? Does she seem to you to be one who ought to be compared with any other. Say, is she not more beautiful than your mother?' 'Of a truth,' replied Nerino, 'she is fair, and nature could not possibly make aught that is fairer; but tell me of your courtesy of whom is she the wife, and where does she dwell?' But to this query Messer Rai-

mondo did not answer so as to humor Nerino's wish, forasmuch as he had no mind to give him the clue he sought. Then said Nerino, 'My good Messer Raimondo, though you may not be willing to tell me who she is and where she dwells, at least you might do me such good office as to let me see her once more.' 'This I will do willingly,' answered Messer Raimondo. 'To-morrow come here again into the church, and I will so bring it to pass that you shall see her as you have seen her to-day.'

When Messer Raimondo had gone back to his house, he said to his wife, 'Genobbia, see that you attire yourself to-morrow; for I wish that you should go to the mass in the Duomo, and if hitherto you have ever made yourself look beautiful or have arrayed yourself sumptuously, see that you do the same to-morrow.' When she heard this, Genobbia (as on the former occasion) was greatly astonished, but since the command of her husband pointed to this matter, she did everything even as he had ordered. When the morrow came, Genobbia, sumptuously clothed and adorned more richly than was her wont, betook herself to the church, and in a very short time Nerino came likewise. He, when he saw how very fair she was, was inflamed by love of her more ardently than ever man had burned for woman before, and, when Messer Raimondo arrived, begged him to tell straightway what might be the name of this lady who seemed in his eyes to be so marvelously beautiful. But Messer Raimondo, making excuse that he was greatly pressed for time to give to his own affairs, was in no humor to thus inform Nerino on the spot, and was rather disposed to leave the galliard to stew for a time in his own fat; so he went his way in high spirits. Whereupon Nerino, with his temper somewhat ruffled by the mean account in which Messer Raimondo seemed to hold him, spake thus to himself: 'Aha! you are not willing

that I should have an inkling as to who she is and where she lives, but I will know what I want to know in spite of you.'

After he had left the church, Nerino waited outside until such time as the fair dame should likewise issue forth, and then, having given her a modest obeisance with a smiling countenance, he went with her as far as her home. Now, as soon as Nerino had got to know clearly the house where she dwelt, he began to cast amorous eyes upon her, and never a day passed on which he would not pass up and down ten times in front of her window. Wherefore, having a great desire to hold converse with her, he set about considering what course he should follow in order to keep unsullied the honor of the lady, and at the same time to attain his own end. But, having pondered over the affair, and looked at it on every side without lighting upon any course which seemed to promise security, he at last, after a mighty amount of imagining, determined to make the acquaintance of an old woman who lived in a house opposite to that occupied by Genobbia. After having sent to her certain presents, and settled and confirmed the compact between them, he went secretly into the old woman's lodging, in which there was a certain window overlooking the hall of Genobbia's house, where he might stand and gaze at his good convenience at the lady as she went up and down about the house; at the same time, he had no wish to divulge himself, and thereby give her any pretext for withdrawing herself from his sight. Nerino, having spent one day after another in these amorous glances, at last found himself no longer able to resist the burning desire within him which consumed his very heart; so he made up his mind to write a letter and to throw it down into her lodging at a certain time when he should judge her husband to be away from home. And several times he wrote such letters as

he had planned, and when opportunity offered he carefully threw them down to her.

But Genobbia without reading the billet she picked up, cast it into the fire, and it was burned. After she had done this several times, on a certain day it came into her mind to break open one of the notes and see what might be written therein. When she had broken the seal and marked that the writer was no other than Nerino, the son of the King of Portugal, who declared thereby his fervent love of her, she was at first wellnigh confounded, but after a little when she had called to mind the poor cheer she enjoyed in her husband's house, she plucked up heart and began to look kindly upon Nerino. At last, having come to an agreement with him, she found means to bring him into the house, when the youth laid before her the story of the ardent love he bore her, and of the torments he endured every day on her account, and in like manner the way by which his passion for her had been kindled. Wherefore the lady, who was alike lovely and kind-hearted and complaisant, felt herself in no humor to reject his suit. And while the two thus foregathered, happy in the consciousness of mutual love and indulging in amorous discourse, lo and behold! Messer Raimondo knocked suddenly at the door. When Genobbia heard this she bade Nerino go straightway and lie down on the bed, and to let down the curtains, and to remain there until such time as her husband should be once more gone out. The husband came in, and having taken divers trifles of which he had need, went away without giving heed to aught besides, and a little later Nerino followed him.

On the following day, when it happened that Nerino was walking up and down the piazza, Messer Raimondo by chance went that way, to whom Nerino made known by sign that he wanted to have a word with him. Wherefore, having approached him, he spake thus:

'Signor, have I not a good bit of news to tell you?' 'And what may it be?' replied Messer Raimondo. 'Do I not know,' said Nerino, 'the house where dwells that beautiful lady? and have I not had some delightful intercourse with her? But because her husband came home unexpectedly she hid me in the bed, and drew the curtains for fear that he should see me; however, he soon went out again.' 'Is it possible?' said Messer Raimondo. 'Possible!' answered Nerino, 'it is more than possible—it is a fact. Never in all my life have I seen so delightful, so sweet a lady as she. If by any chance, signor, you should meet her, I beg you to speak a good word on my behalf, and to entreat her to keep me in her good graces.' Messer Raimondo, having promised to do what the youth asked him, went his way with ill will in his heart. But before he left Nerino he said, 'And do you propose to go in search of your good fortune again?' To this Nerino replied, 'Return! what should one do in such case?' Then Messer Raimondo went back to his house, and was careful to let drop no word in his wife's presence, but to wait for the time when she and Nerino should again come together.

When the next day had come Nerino once more stole to a meeting with Genobbia, and while they were in the midst of their amorous delights and pleasant converse the husband came back to the house, but the lady quickly hid Nerino in a chest in front of which she heaped a lot of clothes from which she had been ripping the wadding to keep them from destruction by insects. The husband, making believe to search for certain things, turned the house upside down, and pried even into the bed, but, finding nothing of the sort he looked for, went about his business with his mind more at ease.

Very soon Nerino also departed, and afterward, chancing to meet Messer Raimondo, he thus addressed him: 'Signor doctor, what would you say if you heard I

had paid another visit to my charming lady, and that envious fortune broke in upon our pleasure, seeing that the husband again arrived and spoilt all our sport?' 'And what did you then?' said Messer Raimondo. 'She straightway opened a chest,' said Nerino, 'and put me therein, and in front of the chest she piled up a heap of clothes which she was working at in order to preserve them from moth, and after he had turned the bed upside down more than once without finding aught, he went away.' What tortures Messer Raimondo must have suffered when he listened to these words I leave to the judgment of any who may know the humors of love.

Now Nerino had given to Genobbia a very fine and precious diamond, within the golden setting of which was engraved his name and his likeness. The very next day, when Messer Raimondo had gone to see to his affairs, the lady once more let Nerino into the house, and while they were taking their pleasure and talking pleasantly together, behold! the husband again came back to the house. But the crafty Genobbia, as soon as she remarked his coming, immediately opened a large wardrobe which stood in her chamber, and hid Nerino therein. Almost immediately Messer Raimondo entered the chamber, pretending as before that he was in search of certain things he wanted, and in quest thereof he turned the room upside down. But, finding nothing either in the bed or in the chest, like a man out of his wits he took fire and strewed it in the four corners of the chamber, with the intention of burning the place and all that it contained.

Now the party walls and the wooden framing of the apartment soon caught fire, whereupon Genobbia, turning to her husband, said: 'What is this you are doing, husband? Surely you must be gone mad. Still, if you wish to burn up the room, burn it as you will, but

by my faith I will not have you burn this wardrobe, wherein are all the papers relating to my dowry.' So, having summoned four strong porters, she bade them carry the wardrobe out of the house and bear in into the neighboring house which belonged to the old woman. Then she opened the wardrobe secretly when no one was by and returned to her own house. Messer Raimondo, now like one out of his mind, still kept a sharp watch to see whether anybody who ought not to have been there might be driven out of hiding by the conflagration, but he met with nothing save the smoke, which was becoming insufferable, and the fierce flames which were consuming the house. And by this time all the neighbors had gathered together to put out the fire, and so well and heartily did they work that in time it was extinguished.

On the following day, as Nerino was sallying forth toward the fields in the valley, he met Messer Raimondo, and, after giving him a salute, said to him: 'Aha, my gentleman! I have got a piece of news to tell you which ought to please you mightily.' 'And what may this news be?' said Messer Raimondo. 'I have just made my escape,' said Nerino, 'from the most frightful peril that ever man came out of without loss of his life. I had gone to the house of my lovely mistress, and while I was spending the time with her in all manner of delightful dallying her husband once more broke in upon our content, and after he had turned the house upside down, lighted some fire, and this he scattered about in the four corners of the room and burned up all the chattels that were about.' 'And you,' said Messer Raimondo, 'where were you the while?' Then answered Nerino, 'I was hidden in a wardrobe which she caused to be taken out of the house.' And when Messer Raimondo heard this, and clearly understood all which Nerino told him to be the truth, he was like to

die of grief and passion. Nevertheless, he did not dare to let his secret be known, because he was determined still to catch him in the act. Wherefore he said to him, 'And are you bent upon going thither again, Signor Nerino?' to which Nerino made answer, 'Seeing that I have come safely out of the fire, what else is there for me to fear?' And, letting pass any further remarks of this sort, Messer Raimondo begged Nerino that he would do him the honor of dining with him on the morrow; which civility the young man willingly accepted.

When the next day had come, Messer Raimondo bade assemble at his house all his own relatives and his wife's as well, and prepared for their entertainment a rich and magnificent repast—not in the house which had been half consumed by fire, but in another. He gave directions to his wife, moreover, that she also should be present, not to sit at table as a guest, but to keep herself out of sight, and see to the ordering of aught which might be required for the banquet. As soon as all the kinsfolk had assembled, and the young Nerino as well, they were bidden take their places at the board, and as the feast went on Messer Raimondo tried his best with his charlatan science to make Nerino drunk, in order to be able to work his will upon him. Having several times handed to the youth a glass of malvoisie wine, which he never failed to empty, Messer Raimondo said to him: 'Now, Signor Nerino, cannot you tell to these kinsfolk of mine some little jest which may make them laugh?' The luckless Nerino, who had no inkling that Genobbia was Messer Raimondo's wife, began to tell the story of his adventures, keeping back, however, the names of all concerned.

It chanced at this moment that one of the servants went into the room apart where Genobbia was, and said to her: 'Madonna, if only you were now hidden in some corner of the feasting-room, you would hear told the

finest story you ever heard in your life. I pray you go in quick.' And, having stolen into a corner, she knew that the voice of the story-teller belonged to Nerino her lover, and that the tale he was giving to the company concerned himself and her as well. Whereupon this prudent and sharp-witted dame took the diamond which Nerino had given her, and, having placed it in a cup filled with a very dainty drink, she said to a servant, 'Take this cup and give it to Signor Nerino, and tell him to drink it off forthwith, that he may tell his story the better.' The servant took the cup, and placed it on the table, whereupon Nerino gave sign that he wished to drink therefrom; so the servant said to him, 'Take this cup, signor, so that you may tell your story the better.'

Nerino took the cup and forthwith drank all the wine therein, when, seeing and recognizing the diamond which lay at the bottom, he let it pass into his mouth. Then making pretense of rinsing his teeth, he drew forth the ring and put it on his finger. As soon as he was well assured that the fair lady about whom he was telling his story was the wife of Messer Raimondo, he had no mind to say more, and when Messer Raimondo and his kinsfolk began to urge him to bring the tale which he had begun to an end, he replied, 'And then and there the cock crowed and the day broke, so I awoke from my sleep and heard nothing more.' Messer Raimondo's kinsmen, having listened to Nerino's story, and up to this time believed all he had said about the lady to be the truth, now imagined that both their host and the young man were drunk.

After several days had passed it happened that Nerino met Messer Raimondo, and feigning not to know that he was the husband of Genobbia, told him that within the space of two days he would take his departure, because his father had written to him to bid him with-

out fail to return to his own country. Whereupon Messer Raimondo wished him good speed for his journey. Nerino, having come to a private understanding with Genobbia, carried her off with him and fled to Portugal, where they long lived a gay life together; but Messer Raimondo, when he went back to his house and found that his wife was gone, was stricken with despair, and died in the course of a few days.

ARGUMENT

Two men who are close friends dupe one another and in the end have their wives in common.

MANY are the tricks and deceptions which men nowadays practice one upon another, but of the whole mass of these you will find none comparable in craft and knavery to those which one friend will use in imposing upon another. And since it has fallen to my lot to open the entertainment this evening with a story, it has come into my mind to give you an account of the subtlety and cunning and treachery which a certain man employed in the befooling of another who was a close friend of his own. And although the first one who tried this knavish game completely duped his friend by the amazing cunning he displayed, yet in the end he found himself tricked by a craft and ingenuity no whit inferior to his own. All of which shall be clearly set forth to you if you will of your kindness give a hearing to my story.

In the famous and ancient city of Genoa there lived in times past two friends, of whom one was called by name Messer Liberale Spinola, a man of great wealth, and at the same time one much addicted to the pleasures of the world, and the other Messer Arthilao Sara, one of the chief merchants of the city. The friendship be-

tween these two was very warm and close; so great, indeed, was their attachment the one for the other, that they could scarce endure to be apart. And if it should happen by any chance that either one of these had need of aught belonging to the other, he could claim it, without delay or hindrance. And seeing that Messer Arthilao was engaged in numerous ventures in merchandise, and had in hand many affairs, both on his own account and on the account of others, he one day had to set out on a journey to Soria. Wherefore, having sought out his dear friend Messer Liberale, he thus addressed him in the same sincere and benevolent spirit he ever felt toward him: 'My friend, you know well, and it is manifest to all men, how great is the love and affection subsisting between us, how I always have relied and still rely upon you, both on account of the friendship we have had for each other for so many years past, and on account of the vow of brotherhood that there is between us. Wherefore, because I have settled in my mind to go to Soria, and because there is no other man in the world whom I trust as I trust you, I come with all boldness and confidence to you to entreat you to do me a favor, which thing, though it may cause no little disturbance to your own economy, I beg that you of your goodness, and for the sake of our mutual good feeling, will not deny me.' Messer Liberale, who was fully inclined to do his friend any kindness he might ask for, without further words concerning the matter, said: 'Arthilao, my dear friend, the love we have one for the other, and the bond of fellowship which our sincere affection has knitted between us, ought to render unnecessary all such discourse as this. Tell me now, without keeping aught behind, what your wishes may be, and lay me under your orders, for I am ready to discharge whatever duty you may put upon me.' Then said Messer Arthilao to his friend: 'My desire and

request of you is to beg you that, so long as I shall be away, you will take under your charge the government of my house, and in like manner of my wife, calling her attention to anything that may be wanted, and whatever sum of money you may disburse on her behalf I will pay you in full on my return.' Messer Liberale, when he understood what his friend wanted of him, first gave him hearty thanks for the high opinion he had of his probity, in that he held him in such good esteem, then he freely promised Messer Arthilao to discharge, to the best of his poor abilities, the task which had been put upon him.

When the time had come for Messer Arthilao to set out on his voyage, having first bestowed all his merchandise on board his ship, he recommended his wife Daria—who, as it happened, was three months gone with child—to the care of his friend, and then set forth, sailing out of Genoa with his sails spread to a favoring wind, and with good fortune to aid him. As soon as Messer Arthilao was embarked and well on his way outward Messer Liberale betook himself to the house of Madonna Daria, his well-beloved neighbor, and thus spake to her: 'Madonna, Messer Arthilao, your good husband and my very dearest friend, before he set forth on this voyage, besought me with the most pressing entreaties to take under my charge the care of all his affairs, and of you yourself, madonna, as well; and likewise to keep you mindful of all the things for your good of which you may stand in need. I, for the sake of the affection which always has existed and still exists between him and me, promised him that I would perform any duty he might lay upon me. Wherefore I have come to you at once in order that you may let me know your will, without hindrance, concerning any matter which may suggest itself to you.'

Now Madonna Daria, who was by nature very sweet

and gentle, thanked Messer Liberale heartily for this speech, begging him at the same time to be as good as his word if at any time she should find herself in need of his good offices. To this Messer Liberale answered that he assuredly would not fail her, and, in discharge of his promise, he was very constant in his visits to his fair neighbor, and took good care that she wanted for nothing. In the course of time it came to his knowledge that she was with child, but feigning to be ignorant thereof, he said one day to her, 'Madonna, how are you feeling? doubtless somewhat estranged on account of the absence of your husband, Messer Arthilao.' And to this Madonna Daria answered, 'Of a surety, my good neighbor, I feel his absence for many reasons, but above all on account of my present condition.' 'And in what condition,' said Messer Liberale, 'may you find yourself?' 'I am three months gone with child,' Madonna Daria replied, 'and there is moreover something strange about this pregnancy of mine. I never felt myself so ill at ease before.' Messer Liberale when he heard this said, 'But, my good neighbor, are you really with child?' 'I would it were you instead, my friend,' said Madonna Daria, 'and that I were well quit of it.'

Now on account of what had passed it ensued that, in the course of interviews of this kind with his fair neighbor, Messer Liberale was so much charmed by her beauty and her soft plump figure, that he became hotly inflamed with amorous desire for her, and night and day could turn his thoughts to nothing else than how he might obtain gratification of his dishonest wishes, but the love in which he held his friend Messer Arthilao kept him back for a time. But after a while, spurred on by the violence of his passion, which melted all his good resolutions, he went one day to Madonna Daria, and said, 'Alas! my dear friend, how deeply grieved I am that Messer Arthilao should thus have gone away

from you and left you pregnant; because, on account of his sudden departure, he may very well have forgotten to complete the child which he begat and which you now carry in your womb. On this account, perchance, it has come to pass that your pregnancy is such an uneasy one.' 'O! my friend,' cried Madonna Daria, 'do you really believe that the infant which I bear in my womb may be lacking in one or another of its limbs, and that I may be suffering therefor?' 'Of a truth,' replied Messer Liberale, 'that is my opinion; nay, I hold it for certain that my good friend Messer Arthilao failed to give it the due number of limbs. It often happens in cases of this sort that one child is born lame and another blind, one of this fashion and another of that.' 'Ah! my dear friend,' said Madonna Daria, 'this thing you tell me greatly troubles my mind. Where shall I look for a remedy, so that this misfortune may not befall me?' 'My dear neighbor,' Messer Liberale replied, 'be of good cheer and do not distress yourself in vain, for know that a remedy is to be found for everything except death.' 'I beg you, for the love you bear to your absent friend,' said Madonna Daria, 'that you will put me in the way of finding this remedy; and the sooner you can let me have it, the more I shall be bound to you; then there will be no danger lest the child should be born imperfect.

When Messer Liberale found that he had brought Madonna Daria into a mood favorable for his purpose, he said to her: 'Dear lady, it would be great baseness and cowardice in a man if, when he saw his friend ready to perish, he did not stretch out his hand to aid him. Wherefore, seeing that I am able to supply the defects which your infant at present has, I should be a traitor to you and should be working you great wrong if I did not come to your assistance.' 'Then, my dear friend,' said the lady, 'do not make any longer delay,

but set to work straightway, so that the child may be made perfect at once; for, besides the pity of it, it would be a most grievous sin.' 'Do not let any doubt on this score trouble you,' said Liberale; 'I will discharge my duty to the full; and now give orders to your waiting-woman that she get ready the table, and in the mean time we will make a beginning of the good work we have in hand.'

Thus, while the waiting-woman was getting in order the table, Messer Liberale went with Madonna Daria into the bedchamber, and having made fast the door, he began to caress her and kiss her, giving her the most loving embracements man ever gave to woman. Madonna Daria was mightily astonished when she saw what Messer Liberale's treatment was, and said to him: 'What does this mean, Messer Liberale? Is it right that we should do such things in such fashion, good neighbors and friends though we be? Alack a day! it is too great a sin; though, if this were not so, I do not know that I should refuse to consent to your wishes.'

Then replied Messer Liberale, 'Pray tell me which is the greater sin, to lie with your friend, or to let this infant come into the world maimed and imperfect?' 'I judge that the greater sin would be,' replied Madonna Daria, 'to let a child be born, through the fault of its parents, in an imperfect state.' 'Then,' rejoined Messer Liberale, 'you would assuredly be guilty of a great offense were you to refuse to let me bring to pass all that work your husband left undone in the formation of the child.' Now the lady, who desired greatly that her offspring should come into the world perfect in all its members, gave credence to these words of her neighbor, and, notwithstanding the close tie between him and her husband, she gave way to his desires, and many and many a time thereafter they took their pleasure together. Indeed, so pleasant to the lady seemed this method of re-

storing to her infant whatever might be wanting, that she was ever begging Messer Liberale to take good heed lest he should fail, as her husband had failed before. Liberale, who found he had fallen upon a very dainty morsel, did his best, both by day and night, to make up anything which might be wanting in the child, so that it might be born perfect in every way. And when Madonna Daria had gone her full time, she was brought to bed with a lusty boy, who proved to be the very counterpart of Messer Arthilao, and perfectly formed, lacking nothing whatsoever in any of his parts. On this score the lady was overjoyed, and full of gratitude to Messer Liberale as the cause of her good fortune.

After a short time had passed Messer Arthilao returned to Genoa and betook himself to his home, where he found his wife restored to health and fair as ever, and she, full of joy and merriment, ran to meet him with her baby in her arms, and they embraced and kissed one another heartily. And as soon as Messer Liberale got news of the return of his friend, he quickly went to see and greet him, congratulating him on his happy return and on his well-being. A few weeks later it happened that Messer Arthilao, as he sat at table one day with his wife and fondled the child, spake thus: 'O Daria, my wife, what a beautiful child this one of ours is! Did you ever see one better made? Look at its whole presence, and admire its pretty face and its bright eyes, which sparkle as if they were stars!' And thus, feature by feature, he went on praising the shapely boy. Then Madonna Daria answered: 'Of a truth there is nothing wanting in him, but that is not altogether owing to our fine performances, my good man; because, as you know well enough, I was three months gone with child when you went away, and the child which I had conceived was not yet fully furnished with his members, whereby I had like to have had grave mischance in my

pregnancy. Wherefore we have great cause to thank our good neighbor Messer Liberale, who was most eager and diligent to supply out of his own strength all that was lacking in the child, making good all those parts where your own work had failed.' Messer Arthilao listened to and fully understood this speech of his wife, and felt wellnigh beside himself with rage. It seemed as if he had a sharp knife in his heart, for he quickly comprehended that Messer Liberale had played the traitor to him and had debauched his wife; but, like a sensible man, he feigned not to have understood the meaning of what he had heard, and held his peace, turning the discourse, when he spoke again, upon other matters.

But when he was risen from the table, Messer Arthilao began to cogitate over the strange and shameful conduct of his friend, whom he had loved and esteemed far above any other man in the world, and day and night he brooded and planned in what fashion, and by what method, he might best avenge himself for the great offense which had been wrought against his honor. The poor wight, thus enraged, harbored ever these projects, scarcely knowing what course he would take, but in the end he determined to do a certain thing which would let him bring to pass the issue he especially willed and desired. Wherefore one day he said to his wife, 'Daria, see that to-morrow our table may be furnished a little more generously than is our wont, because I wish to invite Messer Liberale and Madonna Propertia his wife, our good neighbors, to dine with us; but take heed that, as you love your life, you speak not a word of any sort, and let pass anything you may see or hear without remark or notice.' And Madonna Daria agreed to do as he proposed. Then having left the house he betook himself to the piazza, where he met his neighbor, Messer Liberale, whom, together with his wife, Madon-

na Propertia, he bade come together on the following day. And Messer Liberale gladly accepted the invitation.

On the following day the two invited guests repaired to the house of Messer Arthilao, where they met a most friendly greeting and reception. And when they were all gathered together and were conversing on this thing and that, Messer Arthilao spake thus to Madonna Propertia: 'Dear neighbor, while they are getting ready the viands and setting the table, I would you took some trifle to sustain you.' And, having led her aside into a chamber, he handed to her a beaker of drugged wine with a toast thereto, both of which she took, and, without any fear whatever, ate the toast and emptied the beaker of wine. Then they returned, and, having placed themselves at the table, began merrily the dinner.

But long before the feast had come to an end, Madonna Propertia began to feel drowsiness stealing over her, so that she could scarce hold open her eyes, and Messer Arthilao when he perceived this said: 'Madonna, will it please you to go and rest yourself a little; peradventure last night your slumber was broken,' and with these words he conducted her into a chamber where, having thrown herself upon the bed, she fell asleep at once. Messer Arthilao, fearing lest the potency of his draught should pass off, and that time might fail him for the carrying out of the project which he was secretly keeping in his mind, called Messer Liberale and said to him: 'Neighbor, let us go out for a little, and leave your good wife to sleep as long as she may need; peradventure she was astir somewhat too early this morning and is in want of sleep.' Then they both went out and betook themselves to the piazza, where Messer Arthilao made believe to be pressed in the despatch of certain matters of business, and having bidden farewell to his friend, returned privily to his own house, and, being come there, stole quietly into the

chamber where Madonna Propertia was lying. When he went up to the bed he perceived that she was sleeping quietly, whereupon, without being espied by any one of the people in the house or rousing the notice of the lady herself, he took away from her, with the utmost lightness of hand, the rings she wore on her fingers and the pearls from about her neck, and withdrew from the chamber.

The effects of the medicated draught had entirely dissipated themselves by the time Madonna Propertia awoke, and, when she felt inclined to rise and leave the bed, she remarked that her pearls and her rings were missing; so, having got up, she searched here and there and everywhere, turning everything upside down without finding any trace of the thing she was seeking. Wherefore, mightily upset, she rushed out of the room and began to question Madonna Daria whether by chance she might not have taken her pearls and rings, but Madonna Daria assured her friend that she had seen nothing of them; whereupon Madonna Propertia was wellnigh beside herself with agony. While the poor lady was thus distraught with grief and anxiety, without any notion as to where she should seek a remedy for her trouble, who should come in but Messer Arthilao, and he, when he saw his friend's wife so painfully agitated, said in a somewhat diffident tone: 'What has come to you, dear friend, that you are in such trouble?' In answer to this question Madonna Propertia told him the whole misfortune which had befallen her; whereupon Messer Arthilao, making as if he knew naught of the matter, thus spake to her: 'Make a close search, Madonna, and consider well whether you may not have put these your jewels in some place which you no longer remember. But in any case, supposing that you should not be able to find them, I promise you, on the faith of our old friendship, that I

will make such an investigation of the matter that they who have taken away these things of yours will find they have played a bad turn for themselves; but first, I beg that you will once more make a diligent search in every corner.'

Whereupon the ladies and the serving-women as well searched and re-searched the house from top to bottom, turning everything upside down and finding nothing. Messer Arthilao remarking their ill success, began to make an uproar through the house, threatening now this one and now that with ill handling, but they all swore solemnly that they had no knowledge of the matter. Then Messer Arthilao, turning toward Madonna Propertia said: 'My dear neighbor, be not overcome by this trouble, but keep a light heart, for I am at your service to see this matter to an end. And you must know, my dear friend, that I am the possessor of a secret of so great virtue and efficiency that by its working I shall be able to lay my hand on the man, whoever he may be, who has taken your jewels.'

When she heard these words Madonna Propertia said: 'Oh, Messer Arthilao! of your kindness I beg you to make this experiment, in order that there may be no cause for Messer Liberale to suspect me, or to think of me as an evildoer.' Whereupon Messer Arthilao, seeing that the time was now come when he might meetly work his vengeance for the injury which had been done him of late, called for his wife and for the serving-women, and strictly charged them that they should get them gone out of the chamber, and that no one of them should dare to come near to it under any pretense, except he should summon her thither. And when his wife and the women folk were gone, Messer Arthilao closed the door of the chamber, and having drawn with a bit of charcoal a circle on the floor and figured therein certain signs and characters of his own invention, said

to Madonna Propertia: 'Now, my dear friend, lie down on that bed and take heed you move not, neither have any fear on account of anything you may feel, forasmuch as I will not go hence till I shall have found your jewels.' 'You need not have the smallest fear,' said Madonna Propertia, 'that I will budge an inch, nor indeed do the least thing of any sort, unless I have your commands thereanent.' Then Messer Arthilao, having turned himself toward the right, made certain signs upon the floor, then turning to the left made other signs and conjurations in the air, and pretending the while to be conversing with a multitude of spirits, uttered all sorts of strange noises in a fictitious voice in such a way that Madonna Propertia was not a little bewildered, but Messer Arthilao, who had foreseen this, reassured her, and speaking comforting words to her bade her not to be affrighted. And when he had been within the circle for about half a quarter of an hour, he began to speak certain words in a gurgling tone, which were as follows:

What I have not found, what I am seeking still,
Lies hid in a valley deep beneath a smiling hill;
The one who holds it now, is the one who lost it then;
So take your fishing-rod and you'll win it back again.

Madonna Propertia was fully as much astonished as pleased as she listened to these words, and, when the incantation was finished, Messer Arthilao said: 'Dear friend, you have heard all that was said. The jewels which, as you believed, you have lost, are somewhere about you. There is no need for any further grief. Keep up your spirits, and we will find them all. But it is necessary that I should seek for them in the place where you understand they are.' The lady, who was very desirous to get back her jewels, answered eagerly: 'Good friend, I fully comprehend all this. Do not delay, I beg you, but begin your search with all despatch.'

Whereupon Messer Arthilao came forth out of the circle, and, having made ready for his sport by lying down beside the lady on the bed, straightway began his fishing, and at the same moment when he made his first cast, he drew forth a ring from his bosom (without the lady seeing it), and this he handed to her, saying: 'See, Madonna, how successful, how good a fisherman I am, how at the first cast I have recovered your diamond.' Madonna Propertia, when she saw the diamond, was greatly pleased and said: 'Ah, my good, kind friend! I pray you not yet to cease your fishing; then perhaps you will get back all the other jewels I have lost.' Messer Arthilao kept on at his angling like a man, now bringing out one lost jewel, now another, working so well with his tackle that finally he recovered and handed back to the lady every article that had been lost.

For this service Madonna Propertia was highly grateful and quite satisfied with the issue of the affair, and, having got back all her precious jewels, she said to Messer Arthilao: 'Dear friend, see how many and valuable things you have recovered for me by your good faith and diligence; peradventure by another cast of your line in the same place you might win back for me a beautiful little kettle which was stolen from me some days ago and which I prized very highly.' Then Messer Arthilao answered: 'Most willingly would I do this, were I not somewhat wearied just at present over what I have already done. Be assured that at some future time I shall be quite ready to make a trial to get back your kettle, and I have good hope that we may succeed.' Madonna Propertia was fully content with this proposition, and, having taken leave of Messer Arthilao and Donna Daria, she took her jewels and returned home with a light heart.

A short time after this it happened that one morning, when Madonna Propertia was lying in bed with her hus-

band, and the two chatting pleasantly together, she said to him: 'Oh, husband! i'faith consider whether you might not, by taking a turn of fishing, find for me the little kettle which we lost a long time ago; because, forsooth, some days since I happened to miss certain of my jewels, and Messer Arthilao, our good neighbor, was kind enough to come to my aid, and, by fishing for them most skilfully, found every one of them and gave them back to me. And when I begged him that he would try another cast with the view of finding the kettle, he told me that he was unable to recover it just then, seeing that he had wearied himself somewhat by the fishing he had already done on my behalf. Wherefore, I beg you, let us two make a trial to see whether we may not be able to get it back.'

Messer Liberale, when he listened to this speech, understood well enough what manner of repayment his neighbor had made him for his own trick, and, holding his peace, was fain to pocket the affront patiently. On the following morning the two neighbors, when they met upon the piazza, looked narrowly one at the other, but neither of them had the courage to broach the subject, so nothing was said on one side or the other. Nor did they take their wives into their confidence, but the issue of the affair was that for the future a common right was established for either one to take his diversion with the wife of the other.

ARGUMENT

Anastasio Minuto becomes enamored of a gentlewoman, who rejects his addresses. He reproaches her thereanent, whereupon she tells her husband, who, on account of Anastasio's age, spares his life.

GRACIOUS ladies, although ardent wantonness (as Marcus Tullius writes in his book on old age) is at

all times foul and disgraceful, nevertheless it is offensive in the highest degree when we encounter it in a hoary-headed old man; for besides being in itself a wicked and unclean thing, it saps his strength, weakens his eyesight, robs him of his intellect, makes of him a disgrace and a byword, empties his purse, and, on account of the brief and troublesome term of pleasure it holds out to him as a lure, draws him on to put his hand to all sorts of wickedness. The truth of what I tell you will be made quite clear to you if, according to your wonted custom, you will give a kindly and gracious hearing to the fable I propose to relate to you.

In this our city, which in abundance of fair women outdoes any other in the world, there once lived a certain gentlewoman, very graceful and fully endowed with every beauty, having eyes which, in their loveliness, shone like the morning star. This lady lived in great luxury, and was entertained very delicately by her husband, save in the matter of his marital duties, in the discharge of which he was somewhat slack; wherefore she chose for a lover a lusty and well-mannered youth of honorable family, and made him the object of her favor, lavishing upon him much greater love than she gave to her husband. Now after a time it happened that a certain Anastasio, a friend of her husband's, and now far advanced in years, became so violently enamored of this gentlewoman that he could find no rest either by day or by night; so consuming, indeed, was the passion and torment he felt on account of this love of his, that in a few days he wasted all away, so that he had left scarcely any flesh to cover his bones. He had eyes bleared and rheumy, his forehead was ploughed with wrinkles, his nose was flat and dribbled constantly like that of a young child, and when he sighed the breath he gave forth had an odor so offensive that it nauseated or even poisoned those who had the ill fortune to be in

his neighborhood, and in his mouth he had but two teeth, which were more of a plague than a profit to him. Besides being afflicted with all these ills he was paralytic, and, although the sun might be in Leo and blazing hot as a furnace, the poor old wretch would never feel aught of warmth in his limbs.

This wretched old man, being ensnared and inflamed with senile passion, eagerly solicited the favors of the lady, now by the offer of one gift and now of another; but she, although the gifts which he sent her were rich and of great value, refused them one and all, seeing that she had no need of any offering that he might make her, because her husband was a very rich man and took care to let her want for none of these things. Ofttimes Anastasio would make salutation to her in the street while she was on her way to or from the performance of her religious duties at church, imploring her to accept him as her faithful servant, and no longer to condemn him so cruelly to suffer death by love torment. But she, being a wise and prudent woman, would always cast her eyes down upon the ground, and without answering him a word hasten home.

It happened that Anastasio got intelligence how the young man, of whom we have lately spoken, used to frequent the gentlewoman's house, and he kept so careful a watch upon the goings and comings of the gallant that on a certain evening he saw him enter the house while the husband was absent from the city. When he remarked this he felt as great a pang as if a knife had been driven into his heart, and half beside himself as he was in the frenzy of passion, taking no heed either of his own honor or of that of the lady whom he sought, he took from his store a great quantity of jewels and money, and having gone to the lady's house knocked loudly at the door. The maid of the gentlewoman, when she heard that someone was knocking at the door,

went on the balcony, and cried out: 'Who knocks?' Whereupon the old man made answer: 'Open the door forthwith, for I am Anastasio, and I have certain weighty business to discuss with Madonna.' The servant, when she knew who it was, ran quickly to her mistress, who at that moment was taking her pleasure with her lover in the next room. Having called her out the maid said to her: 'Madonna, Messer Anastasio is below, knocking at the door.' To this the lady answered: 'Go down quickly and tell him to go about his business at once, for it is not my wont to open my doors to anybody at night when my husband is away from home.' The servant, having heard and understood these words of her mistress, went down as she had been directed and repeated them to Messer Anastasio, but the old man, feeling that he was slighted in being thus repulsed, grew angry and began to knock more fiercely than ever at the door and to insist on being let into the house. The gentlewoman when she heard this was filled with wrath and anger, not only on account of the hurly-burly made by the silly old man, but also because of her lover, who was in the house with her; so she went to the window and cried out: 'I am in truth mightily amazed, Messer Anastasio, that you should thus come without any consideration to knock and clamor at the doors of other people's houses. Go to bed, you silly old man, and do not annoy those who have no wish to annoy you. If my husband were at home and in the house I would open to you without delay; but seeing that he is abroad, I cannot and will not do this thing.' But the old man went on affirming that he wanted to confer with her on affairs of the greatest moment, and all the time they were talking kept on still knocking at the door.

The lady, perceiving how persistent was the importunity of the dirty old beast, and fearing lest he in his fool-

ishness might speak words injurious to her honor, withdrew a little and took counsel with her young lover as to what she should do. He made answer that she might very well open the door and hear what thing it might be he had to tell her, and that she need have no fear. Whereupon the gentlewoman (the old man knocking vigorously outside the while) bade them light a torch for her, and then told her maid to open the door. When Anastasio had come into the hall, the lady, looking as fair and fresh as a morning rose, issued from her chamber, and, going toward him, asked him what business he had with her at that hour of the night. The amorous old dotard with wheedling and piteous words, and scarcely keeping back his tears, thus answered: 'Oh, signora, you are the only hope and support of my wretched life! Therefore let it not be a wonder to you that I, rashly and presumptuously forsooth, should come knocking at your door to your surprise and alarm. Of a truth I have not come to annoy you, but to make manifest to you the passion I feel for you, and how sharply I am tormented therefor. And I need not tell you that the cause of my woe is your surpassing beauty, which renders you the queen of all women, and if the founts of pity in your heart are not entirely sealed up, you will spare a thought for me who on your account die a thousand times a day. Ah, soften a little that hard heart of yours! Think nothing of my age nor of my mean condition, but of my true and devoted mind, and of the ardent love which I bear for you now, and will ever bear as long as my sad soul shall be joined to my stricken and afflicted body. And as a token of this my love for you, I beg that of your kindness you will accept this gift, and, trifling though it be, will hold it dear.' And with these words he drew from his bosom a purse full of golden ducats which shone bright as the sun, and a string of great round white pearls and two

jewels set in gold delicately worked. These he presented to the gentlewoman, imploring her in the meantime not to deny him her love; but she, when she heard and clearly understood the words of the infatuated old man, thus made answer to him: 'Messer Anastasio, I always thought you were a man of better understanding than I now find you to be, forasmuch as you seem to have lost your wits entirely. Where is the good sense and the prudence which you as a man of mature years ought to exhibit? Do you think I am no better than a harlot that you come tempting me by your gifts? Certes, you are hugely mistaken if this is your belief. I have no need of these things you have brought hither, and I bid you carry them rather to some profligate woman who will serve your purpose. I, as you ought to know, have a husband who denies me nothing that I may require. Go your way then, and God speed you, and take care that you order your life aright for the short space of time which yet awaits you on earth.'

The old man when he heard these words was filled with grief and compunction, and said: 'Madonna, I cannot believe you mean what you say! Nay, I am sure that you have spoken thus because you are in fear of the young man whom you have now with you in your house.' And here he forthwith mentioned the gallant by name. 'If you will not content me,' he went on, 'and yield to my desires, I will assuredly denounce your conduct to your husband, who is my friend.' The lady, when she heard Anastasio mention the name of the young man who was at this time in her chamber, was not in the least shamefaced and cast down, but on the other hand began to shower the most violent abuse upon the old man that had ever been spoken from one person to another. Then she took in her hand a stout stick, and she would certainly have given him a shrewd basting therewith had he not discreetly slipped down

the stairs and fled away from the house with all the speed he could make.

The lady, as soon as the old man had departed, went back into the chamber where she had left her lover, and, scarcely keeping back her tears, told him of the mischance that had befallen her. She feared greatly in sooth lest the villainous old man might carry out his threat and unfold everything he had seen to her husband, wherefore she began to take counsel of her gallant as to what course she should adopt. The young man, who was shrewd and well-advised, first comforted the lady and bade her be of good heart; then he set forth to her an excellent scheme which he had devised, saying: 'My soul, do not be alarmed or discouraged, but take the advice which I shall now give you, and rest assured that everything will come to a prosperous issue. As soon as your husband shall have returned to the house, set the whole matter before him concerning the old man's intrusion here just as it happened. And tell him how this wicked and miserable old dotard heaps slander upon you, saying that you have guilty relations with this man and that. Then you must call over by name five or six young men whom you know, giving my name as the last on the list. Having done this we will leave the rest to fortune, which will of a certainty be propitious to your cause.'

This counsel given by her lover seemed to the lady wise and judicious, and she forthwith did everything as he had advised her. When the husband came home she at once presented herself with an aspect very sad and wobegone, and with her eyes streaming with tears. Then she began to curse the fate which tormented her so cruelly, and when her husband set himself to question her as to what her affliction was, she answered that she could not tell him. But after a little she cried out in a loud voice, weeping bitterly the while: 'Of a truth

I know not what should keep me back from making an end of this wretched life of mine with my own hands! I cannot endure that a perfidious wretch should be the cause of my ruin and lasting shame. Ah, unhappy woman that I am! What have I done amiss that I should be slandered and cut to the very quick in this wise, and by whom has this ill been wrought? By a very hangman, a murderer, who deserves a thousand deaths!' Having been pressed by her husband to speak further she went on and said: 'That headstrong old dotard, Anastasio, who calls himself your friend, that silly lecherous and wicked old man, did he not come to me a few nights ago asking of me things as dishonest as they were wicked, and offering me money and jewels as the price of my compliance? And because I would not listen to a word of what he had to say or consent to what he wanted, he began to revile me shamefully and to call me a lewd woman, and to declare that I brought men into the house with me, entangling myself now with one, now with another. When I listened to such words as these I nearly died of grief, but after a little, having collected my wits and my courage, I caught up a stick wherewith to baste him soundly, and he, fearing lest I might carry out my intent, ran away as fast as possible and fled from the house.'

The husband, when he heard this speech of his wife, was vexed beyond measure and set about comforting her, saying that he would play Anastasio a trick which he would remember as long as he lived. Wherefore, when the following day had come, the husband of the lady and Anastasio chanced to meet one another, and before the husband could utter a word Anastasio made a sign that he had something to say to him, and the husband at once signified to him that he was willing to listen to anything he might have to tell. Whereupon Anastasio spake thus: 'Sir, you know how sincere the

love and goodwill subsisting between us has always been; it would be impossible indeed to add aught thereto. On this account I, being urged by jealous care for your honor, have determined to say somewhat to you, begging you at the same time by the love there is between us, that you will keep what I shall tell you a secret, and that you will look into your household affairs as soon as may be with due prudence and foresight. And now, in order not to hold you in suspense by any long preamble, I will tell you that your wife is amorously sought by a certain young man, and that she, on her part, returns his love, and frequently takes her pleasure with him, thereby working great shame and disgrace upon all your family. All this which I tell you I declare to be the truth, for the other night, when you chanced to be away from the city, with my own eyes I saw him enter your house wearing a disguise, and I saw him likewise issue therefrom early the next morning.' The husband, when he heard these words from Anastasio, flew into a violent rage, and began to heap abuse on him, saying: 'Ah, you villainous rascal, you hangman, you wicked wretch! What is there to keep me from seizing you by your beard, and pulling it out from your chin one hair at a time? Do I not know what manner of woman my wife is, and do I not know likewise how you attempted to corrupt her with money and jewels and pearls? In sooth, had I not some pity for your old age, I would assuredly tread you under my feet, and not cease kicking you till your wretched soul should have left your body. Now go and be hanged, you miserable old man!' The old man, when he heard these words, pocketed his disappointment and slunk away like one dumbfounded, and the astute and wily gentlewoman in future, under her husband's protection, spent many a merry hour with her lover in greater security than ever.

THREE NOVELS
FROM IL PECORONE
BY
SER GIOVANNI FIORENTINO
(Died in 1348)

SER GIOVANNI FIORENTINO ("Messer Giovanni the Florentine") began to write his striking studies of Italian life and manners, which were embodied in the collection known as *Il Pecorone* ("the big sheep"), as early as 1326, but they were not published in one volume until 1558, at Milan. Although these stories are celebrated, and were imitated by numerous writers of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the identity of their author has always been a mystery, many authorities agreeing that he was none other than Giovanni Villani, an Italian historian, who died of the plague in 1348.

PROEM

IN order to let fall some sparkling ray of refreshing light and consolation upon him who may be in that mood, which in times gone by has weighed on me, I am moved by charitable and loving zeal to make beginning of this book of mine, in which we will treat of a young man, Brother Aurette, and a maid, Sister Saturnina, who—as you will understand in reading this narrative—were most fervently enamored one of another. And for the reason that they knew so well how to keep secret their meetings, and to bear the yoke of brighteyed love, they have supplied me with matter wherewith to build up the book which follows, especially when I came to hear of their graceful inventions, their seemly bearing, and of the amorous conversation they held with one another in order to mitigate the burning flame of love which consumed them. Wherefore, finding myself at Dovadola, with my fortunes blasted, and hunted by ill luck, as you will be able to

understand while you read this book, and having at hand material and invention sufficient to let me tell my story, I began this work in the year of Christ MCCCLXXVIII, the year when, by Divine grace, Urban VI, my fellow-countryman, was elected to the supreme pontificate, the most serene Charles IV being, by the grace of God, King of Bohemia and Emperor of the Romans.

In the city of Forli, in Romagna, there was a certain monastery where dwelt a prioress and several sisters, all women of holy, upright, and perfect lives, and amongst them was Sister Saturnina, who was in the flower of her youth, and as well-mannered, prudent, and fair to look upon as nature could have made her. Moreover, on account of her honest and heavenly way of life, the prioress and the other sisters held her in the highest affection and reverence. The fame of her loveliness and virtue shone abroad through the whole country, so richly had she been dowered by nature; and on this account a young man of Florence, named Aurette, a prudent, clever, and well-mannered youth, one well versed in the ways of the world, and one who had spent the greater part of his possessions in his liberal courtesy, became enamored forthwith of the lovely Saturnina through the fame of her beauty, without having ever looked upon her face. Wherefore he determined to enter the brotherhood, and to betake himself to Forli, and to offer himself as chaplain to the prioress, so that he might have conveniency to see Saturnina, so ardently did he burn with love of her. Having settled to do this thing, he put in order all his affairs, and became a friar, and went to Forli. There he contrived, by enlisting with much skill the assistance of some personage of weight, to become chaplain to the monastery. He bore himself with so much prudence and wisdom that, in a short time, he gained the goodwill of the prioress

and of all the other sisters, but chiefly he won the favor of Saturnina, whom he loved more than his life.

Now it happened that while the said Brother Aurette gazed in honest love at Sister Saturnina, and she at him, Love, whose lesson is soon learned by gentle hearts, bound these two together in such wise that at first they would greet each other from a distance with smiles. Then, following the course of love, they frequently took one another by the hand, and spake together, and wrote numerous letters, their love waxing so rapidly that they planned to meet each other at a certain hour in the convent parlor, a place which was secluded and little frequented. When they had once met and held converse there, they settled to come thither once every day, so that they might talk there at their ease. And they made a rule that each one should tell a new story every day for recreation and delight, which thing was duly brought to pass.

ARGUMENT

Bucciolo and Pietro go to study at Bologna. Bucciolo, having been licensed to practise the law, resolves to return to Rome without his friend, but afterward settles to wait for him. Meantime he asks the master who has taught him what is the right way to make love. The good fortune which befell him thereanent, and the evil case of the master.

SATURNINA began the story-telling as follows:

In the family of the Savelli at Rome there were at a certain time two young men who were close friends and companions, one of whom was called Bucciolo and the other Pietro Paolo. They were well-born and plentifully supplied with the world's goods, and it chanced that they were both of them seized with the desire to go and study at Bologna, the one intending to study civil

and the other statutory law. Wherefore, having bidden their kinsfolk farewell, they took their way to Bologna; and, when they arrived there, they set themselves to study the laws as they had settled, and kept diligently at their learning for some time. Now it must be well known to you that the statute law is far less in volume than the other branch, and on this account Bucciolo, who had engaged himself with the first named, mastered his work much more rapidly than did Pietro Paolo, and, as soon as he had graduated, he made up his mind to go back to Rome. One day he said to Pietro Paolo, 'Comrade, since I have now graduated I have resolved to return home.' Whereupon Pietro Paolo answered him and said, 'I beg you that you will not leave me here alone, but that you make it your pleasure to tarry with me here during the winter, and when the spring shall have come we will return home together. You might occupy yourself meanwhile by studying some new science, so as not to waste your time.'

Bucciolo was content to follow his friend's suggestion, and promised to wait for him, and it came to pass that to avoid loss of time he went to his master and said, 'I have made up my mind to await here until my friend and kinsman shall be ready to depart; wherefore I beg you that you will vouchsafe to teach me meanwhile some seemly science or other.' To him the master replied that he would do this with pleasure, and added, 'And now you must make choice of whatever science you wish to learn, and I will willingly teach you the same.' Then said Bucciolo, 'My Master, I would fain learn how to make love, and how to set about such work.' The master could scarce keep from laughing as he listened, and said, 'In sooth your choice pleases me well, for you could not possibly have fixed upon any other science which would have given me so much

delight. Now on Sunday morning I would have you go to the church of the Friars Minor, where you will be sure to find all the ladies of the city gathered together, and then consider well in your mind whether you may not espy there some one or other who pleases your fancy. When you have found such an one, follow her up, and do not lose sight of her till you shall have discovered where she lives. Then come back to me. This is the first part of the science that I would have you learn.'

Whereupon Bucciolo went his way, and on the following Sunday morning he betook himself, as his master had directed him, to the church of the Friars; and, having cast his eyes round upon the assembled ladies, of whom there were a great number, he espied amongst them one who pleased him mightily, forasmuch as she was exceedingly fair and graceful. When the women went out of the church, Bucciolo followed after this lady, and saw and noted the house where she lived. She, when she observed his doings, was well advised that this scholar was beginning to be enamored of her. Then Bucciolo went back to the master and said, 'I have not failed to do the thing you directed me to do, and indeed I have seen a lady who pleases my taste exactly.' When he heard this the master was hugely delighted, and fell to bantering Bucciolo somewhat with regard to the particular science he was so full of desire to learn, and spake to him thus: 'Now see that you fail not to pass by her house twice or thrice every day with modest and seemly carriage, and be sure to keep your eyes well within bounds, and do not let it appear as if you were looking at her; but take as much pleasure as you can from the sight of her, so that she, observing this, may be fully assured that you are her well-wisher. When you have done this, come back to me, for this is the second part of your lesson.'

Bucciolo went at once from the master's presence and forthwith began to walk up and down in front of the lady's house in discreet fashion, so that she doubted not that he had come thither for her sake. On this account, after a short time had passed, she would cast now and then a glance at him; whereupon Bucciolo gave her a modest salute, a courtesy which she returned again and again. Thus Bucciolo deemed that the lady was indeed enamored of him. He took an account of all that had passed back to the master, who answered and said to him, 'What you have done pleases me much, and I am quite contented. You have learned your lesson well up to this point, but now it will be necessary for you to find some means of getting one or other of those women who are wont to go about Bologna selling veils and satchels and such things, to speak to her, and then you must send word to the lady, and tell her that you are her servant, and that there is no one in all the world who possesses your goodwill so completely as she does, and that you are ready to do anything to give her pleasure which she may demand. Then you will see whether she may have aught to say to you, and whatever her answer may be, you must come and give me information thereof, and according to its terms I will let you know what it behooves you to do next.'

Bucciolo took his leave, and managed to find a pedlar-woman who was well fitted to discharge an office of this sort, and said to her, 'I desire greatly that you should do me a most pressing service, one for which I will pay you liberally, so that you shall be well satisfied.' The woman made answer, 'I will do for you whatever you may ask of me, for I come here for no other reason than to earn an honest penny.' Thereupon Bucciolo gave her two florins, and said to her, 'I wish you to go this day into a street which is called La Mascarella, where there lives a young gentlewoman whose name is Ma-

donna Giovanna, a lady whom I love more than any other in the world. I want you to commend me to her, and furthermore to tell her that I am ready to do anything that may be her pleasure. Be sure to tell her all this in those soft words which you assuredly know so well how to use.' Then said the old woman, 'Leave all this business to me, and I will find a fitting time for the discharge thereof.' Bucciolo replied, 'Go about it at once, and I will await you here.'

The pedlar-woman straightway departed, taking with her a basket of her wares; and, having gone to the house of the lady aforesaid, she found her seated in her doorway. After she had given the lady salutation, she said, 'Madonna, is there amongst these wares of mine anything which it would please you to possess? Should there be any, take it without hesitation, if so be it will give you pleasure.' And with these words she sat down by the lady's side and began to show her the veils, and the satchels, and the ribbons, and the mirrors, and all the other things she had to sell. When she had looked at many of the old woman's wares, she came upon a satchel there which pleased her greatly; whereupon she said, 'In sooth, if I had money therefor, I would willingly buy from you this satchel.' The woman said, 'Madonna, there is no need for you to trouble yourself on that score. If there should be anything here which pleases you, take it at once, for all these wares are paid for already.' The lady was mightily astonished when she heard these words, and at seeing how great were the blandishments which the old woman used upon her, so she said, 'My good woman, what do you mean by speaking such words as these to me?' Whereupon the pedlar-woman, almost ready to shed tears, said, 'I will tell you all about the matter. The truth is, that there is a young gentleman whose name is Bucciolo, and he it is who has sent me to you. He loves you well, and

nourishes for you greater kindness than for anyone else in the world; nay, there is not anything lying within his powers which he would not do for your sake. He protested to me indeed that God could show him no greater favor than to make you command him to do some service on your behalf. In truth, it seems to me that he is wasting away, so great is his desire to have speech with you, and, besides this, I do not think that I ever saw a more worthy and upright youth than he is.' The lady, when she heard these words, blushed the color of scarlet, and, turning to the pedlar-woman, spake thus, 'If it were not that I feel obliged to spare you for the sake of my honor, I would handle you in a fashion that would make you lament the day you ventured to address me in such wise. How, indeed! are you not ashamed, profligate old wretch as you are, to come with such discourse to an honest woman? May God vex you therefor!' And with these words the young lady caught up the crossbar of the door, in the mind to lay it over the old woman's back, crying out the while, 'If you ever dare to come back here, I will belabor you in such fashion that you will never be able to show yourself again.'

Upon this the old woman gathered together her wares with all possible speed and hurried away as fast as she could go, for she was in great dread lest she should be made to feel the weight of that crossbar, and she felt herself in no way safe until she had returned to the place where she had left Bucciolo. As soon as Bucciolo saw her he asked her what news she had to tell him, and how the affair was progressing; whereupon she answered and said, 'It is going on very badly, for indeed I never felt so great fear in all my life, and the upshot of the matter is that the young woman will neither see you nor listen to your messages. And if I had not chanced to get me quickly out of her reach, I should

surely have been made to taste the quality of a heavy crossbar which she had in her hand. As far as I am concerned, I am in no mind to go back to her, and I will advise you also to entangle yourself no further with her.' Bucciolo was greatly perturbed and grieved at what the old woman had to tell him, and went straightway to the master, and let him know all that had come to pass.

But the master gave him encouragement and said, 'Do not despair, Bucciolo, for the tree does not fall at the first stroke. But be sure that you fail not to pass by her house this evening, and then you can note what sort of glance she gives you, and see whether she appears angered with you or not. Then come back here to me and report what you have seen.' Thereupon Bucciolo betook himself toward the house where his lady dwelt, and she, as soon as she beheld him approaching, called to one of her maids and said to her, 'Follow that young man and tell him from me that he is to come to my house to-night and speak to me, and on no account to fail.' The maid set out forthwith, and went to Messer Bucciolo and said to him, 'Messere, Madonna Giovanna has bidden me to ask you to come to her to-night, as she wishes to speak to you.' Bucciolo was much astonished when he heard this, and answered her saying, 'Take word back to her from me and tell her that I will gladly do her bidding.' And he went straightway to the master to let him know how the business was going.

The master was greatly astonished at what he heard from Bucciolo, and now indeed he began to suspect that this lady might perchance prove to be his own wife, as indeed she really was. Wherefore he said to Bucciolo, 'Well, and will you go to her as she asks?' and the young man answered that he would assuredly go to meet the lady. Then the master went on and said, 'When you go on your errand, see that you pass by here

on your way,' and Bucciolo assured him that he would not fail to do this, and departed. Now, as it has already been noted, this young woman was the master's wife, but of this Bucciolo had no knowledge. Moreover, the master had more than once been seized with jealousy on her account; for during the winter it was his wont to sleep at the schools, in order that he might give instruction to the scholars during the evening, while his wife was left alone in the house with the maid.

Now the master said to himself, 'It is not at all to my taste that this youth should become proficient in the science of love making at my cost; therefore I must find out how the matter stands.' When Bucciolo came to him in the evening, and told him that he was now on the way to his appointment, the master said to him, 'Good, and be sure that you bear yourself discreetly.' Bucciolo answered that the master might well leave this to him, and took his departure.

Bucciolo had been careful to put a stout cuirass upon his back, and to take with him likewise a good knife and a sword of proof, so he did not enter upon this adventure like a fool. After a few minutes had passed the master followed upon the track of his pupil, who, all unwitting that he was being thus dogged, went up to the door of the lady's house and knocked thereat. She at once opened it to him, and he went in. When the master saw that it was indeed his wife who was engaged in this business, he almost swooned, and cried out, 'Now I see that this fellow has learned his lesson at my expense.' Then he began to cast about in his mind how he might take his vengeance by killing Bucciolo; and, having hastily gone back to the schools, he borrowed a sword and a dagger, and then returned, raging with anger, to his house with the intention of working some injury to Bucciolo. When he had come to the door he began to knock at it like one in great haste, and the lady, who

was seated at the fireside with her lover, was at once seized with the fear that this must be the master; wherefore she took Bucciolo and concealed him straightway under a heap of linen, recently washed and not yet dry, which she had piled up on a table under the window. Having done this, she went to the door and demanded who was there; whereupon the master called out, 'Open the door and I will soon let you know, wicked woman that you are.' Whereupon his wife opened the door to him at once; and, marking that he had a sword in his hand, cried out, 'Alas! my lord, what is the meaning of this?' The master said, 'You know well enough what man it is you have in the house.' His wife replied, 'Woe is me! What is this you are saying? Are you out of your mind? Search everywhere for what you are seeking, and if you find any man here, cut me in pieces. Why should I begin now-a-days to do what I have never thought of doing hitherto? Take care, my good sir, lest the great enemy should make you see certain things which may cause you to lose your wits.' In spite of these words the master made them kindle for him a torch, and then he began to hunt about amongst the casks in the cellar. After this he went upstairs again and searched every corner of the bedchamber, and looked under the bed, thrusting his sword through the straw mattress and piercing it with holes in every part. In short, he searched every hole and corner of the house without having the wit to find what he was seeking.

In the mean time his wife always kept close to his side with the torch in her hand, crying out from time to time, 'Good master, see that you cross yourself, for of a surety the enemy of mankind must be tempting you, and stirring up your imagination to perceive certain things which could not possibly have any existence; for, if there was a single hair on my body which thought

to do the things you speak of, I would kill myself outright. Therefore, I pray you, for God's sake, not to suffer yourself to be thus tempted.' On this account the master, when he saw that there was no one in the house, and listened to what his wife had to say, was fain to believe that he had been deceived. Then, after tarrying a short time longer, he put out the torch and went back to the schools. As soon as he was out of the way Madonna Giovanna locked the door, and made Bucciolo come forth from under the heap of linen. After they had kindled a big fire they made a good supper off a fine fat capon, and drank therewith wine of various sorts, and thus they feasted most excellently well. Many times the lady said to the youth, 'See now, my husband has no notion of what we are doing.' And after they had feasted with much jollity to their hearts' content, the lady took Bucciolo by the hand, and led him into the bedchamber, where with merry sporting they went to bed together, and all through that night they took their fill of that pleasure which they both desired, giving one another the greatest delight over and over again.

When the night, for which they had longed so ardently, came to an end, the day broke, and Bucciolo having got up from the bed, said to the lady, 'Madonna, I must needs now take my leave; have you any commands to lay upon me?' Then the lady replied, 'Yes, I desire that you should come to me again to-night.' Bucciolo assured her that he would not fail her in this, and when he had taken leave of her he left the house and made his way back to the schools, and said to the master, 'I have somewhat to tell you which will make you laugh.' The master demanded to know what this might be; whereupon Bucciolo said to him, 'Last night, when I was in the house of the lady I told you of, lo and behold! her husband came all unexpectedly and searched

the house from top to bottom, but he could not find me, forasmuch as his wife had hidden me away beneath a pile of linen which had been washed and was not yet dry. And to make a short story of it, the lady knew so well how to cajole her husband that she induced him to go away. After this we took our supper off a fat capon, and drank the most delicate wines, and altogether spent the night in the greatest feasting and jollity you ever heard of, and thus we took our diversion till the day broke. And because I slept scarcely at all last night, I must now go and take a little rest, seeing that I have given her my promise to go back to her this evening.' The master said to him, 'See that you let me know when you are about to return to her.' Bucciollo said that he would willingly do this, and went away, leaving the master so greatly inflamed with rage that he could find no rest for his grief, and was quite unable to do his teaching in the schools, so sharply was his heart vexed with indignation; but, having made a plan how he might catch Bucciollo when evening should have come, he provided himself with a cuirass and a helmet for the adventure.

When it was drawing toward evening Bucciollo, who knew naught of these preparations, went innocently to the master, and said to him, 'I am now going to the lady's house.' The master answered him, 'Go, and come back here to-morrow morning, and let me know how you have fared.' Bucciollo said that he would not fail to do this, and then went forthwith to the house of Madonna Giovanna. As soon as he was gone the master caught up his arms and followed close behind him, almost step for step, having planned to come up with him on the threshold. But the lady, who was on the alert, opened the door very quickly, and, having let in her lover, she closed it again and turned the key. The master followed the next moment, and began to knock and

make a great uproar; whereupon the lady immediately put out the light and made Bucciolo get behind her as she stood in the passage. Then she opened the door, and, embracing the master with one arm, with the other she thrust Bucciolo forth from the house in such wise that her husband caught not a glimpse of him. Then she began to scream aloud, 'Help, help! for the master has gone mad,' holding him tight in her arms meanwhile. The neighbors, when they heard the noise and uproar she made, ran together to the house, and, seeing the master there fully armed, and hearing the outcry of the lady, who went on exclaiming, 'Hold him tight, for he has lost his wits through too much study,' they understood what was the matter, and believed that he was, indeed, out of his mind, and began to say to him, 'Now, good master, what is the meaning of this? Go to bed and rest, and do not struggle any more.' Whereupon the master cried out, 'How should I go to bed and rest myself when I know that this wicked woman has a man in the house? I myself saw him enter.' Madonna Giovanna, when she heard this, cried out, 'Ah, what a wretched life I have to lead! Ask every one of our neighbors here whether anybody has ever heard of misconduct of mine.' Then all the men and women there assembled exclaimed, 'Master, you must not harbor such thoughts, for there was never born into the world a woman of better nature, or manners, or reputation, than your good wife here.' The master said, 'How can this be, when I myself saw a man enter the house, and know quite well that he is still hiding there?'

In the mean time the two brothers of the lady had joined the gathering; and she, when she saw them, burst into tears immediately and said, 'My brothers, this husband of mine has gone mad, and has dared to say that I have a man concealed in this house. Moreover, he is fain to kill me. Now you will know well

enough whether I have ever been the sort of woman of whom such slanderous words might be spoken.' The brothers cried out, 'We are indeed amazed that you should call our sister a lewd woman. Why should you hold her to be one now, more than heretofore, seeing that you have lived a long time with her?' The master replied, 'I can tell you naught else than that there is a man in the house, and that I have seen him with my own eyes.' Then said the brothers, 'Well, come and let us search for him, and if he is indeed here we will advance this fact against her, and cause her to be punished to your full satisfaction.' Then one of the brothers called to his sister and said, 'Tell me all the truth. Have you anyone hidden here in the house?' whereto the lady answered, 'Alas! what are you saying? Christ defend me from this, and let me die sooner than that a single hair of me should think of doing such wickedness. Alas, alas! is it likely that I should now set myself to do a thing of which no one of our family was ever accused? Are you not ashamed even to speak to me thereof?'

The brothers were well content with what their sister said, and they, together with the master, went forthwith to search the house. The master flew straight to the pile of linen, and began to run it through and through with his sword, fighting with it as if it had been Bucciolo himself, for he was well assured in his mind that Bucciolo was hidden thereunder. Wherefore Madonna Giovanna cried out: 'Did I not tell you that he was out of his mind? You fool, to go and spoil all this good linen. It is easy to see that you never spun it.' When they saw this the brothers were well assured that the master had gone mad, and after they had searched every place closely without finding anyone, one of them said, 'This man is indeed mad,' and the other cried out, 'By my faith, O master, you are guilty of a foul wrong

when you try to make out that this sister of ours is a lewd woman.' Whereupon the master, who was mightily incensed, and was quite well assured in his own mind as to what had really happened, now broke out into a terrible passion against the brothers, and threatened them with the naked sword he held in his hand; whereupon each of the brothers caught up a stout stick and gave the master so sound a drubbing therewith that both of the sticks were broken over his back. Next they tied him up as a madman, saying that he had lost his wits through overmuch study, and all that night they remained in their sister's house.

On the following morning they sent for a doctor, who caused a bed to be prepared for the master close to the fire, and gave orders that he should not be suffered to hold converse with anyone; that, when he should speak, no answer should be returned to him, and that he should be kept on very strict diet until his wits should be sharpened once more. And all these directions were carried out to the full.

The news how the master had gone mad was soon spread all through Bologna; whereupon all those who heard it grieved amain, saying one to the other, 'Of a certainty I suspected something of this sort yesterday, for the reason that he was quite unable to deliver his lecture.' And another one said, 'I too remarked that he was mightily changed.' So that on this account men went about saying that the master had gone mad, and divers of his acquaintance went in company to pay him a visit. Bucciolo, who knew naught of what had happened, went to the schools brimful with delight to tell the master how he had fared last night, but when he arrived there he was told how the master had suddenly lost his wits. Bucciolo was greatly astonished at this, and found it almost incredible, and he went with the others to visit the sick man.

But when he came to the master's house he was seized with the greatest astonishment, and was ready to faint when he perceived how the case really stood; still, in order to let no suspicions get abroad, he went in with the rest, and when he entered the room he saw the master, all battered and bound with a rope, lying on the bed near the fire. All the scholars who were there went and condoled with him, saying how much grieved they were for what had happened. And Bucciolo felt that he must needs go and speak a word also; wherefore he drew near to him and said, 'My master, I am sorely grieved for you as if you were my own father, and, if there be aught that I can do on your behalf, do not fail to regard me as your own son.' The master answered and said, 'Bucciolo, Bucciolo, go your way in God's name, for you have learned your task only too well, and learned it, moreover, at my expense.' Madonna Giovanna, when she heard this, cried out, 'Take no heed of his words, for he raves and knows not what he is talking of.' Then Bucciolo took his leave and returned to Pietro Paolo, and said to him, 'My brother, I would have you stay here in Bologna, and finish your studies alone, in God's name. I, in sooth, have learned so much that I am not minded to learn anything more.' And thus he went his way and returned to Rome, good luck attending him.

ARGUMENT

Buondelmonte falls in love with Nicolosa, who had married one of the family of Acciaiuoli, foes of the Buondelmonti, and by the help of a serving-woman contrives to gain admission to her bed. The narrative of what the lady did thereupon: how peace was restored between the two families, and how the young man compassed his vengeance.

WHEN Saturnina had brought her novel to an end, Frate Aurette began and spake thus: "My Saturnina,

I have found your story to be a masterly piece of work, and have got much pleasure therefrom. I will now tell you a tale which I think will please you.

One time there lived in Florence (where they live still) two noble families, one called Buondelmonti and the other Acciaiuoli, who dwelt opposite to one another in a street called Borgo Santo Apostolo, each family being illustrious and ancient. It happened that by a certain disagreement between them they became mortal enemies, and each party always went armed about the streets, keeping sharp watch the one on the other, and each one taking care to be on guard. One of the Acciaiuoli was married to a lady who was the proudest beauty in all Florence, and was named Nicolosa; and a certain youth of the Buondelmonti fell deeply in love with her. The lady could not move about her bed-chamber without being seen by him from his own window, which was opposite, and many a time he had sight of her during the summer when she rose naked from her bed. Now Buondelmonte, being inflamed with love of her and conscious of the enmity of her husband, knew not what he should do, but one day he determined to speak to the lady's waiting-woman; and, observing this woman going to market in the morning, he called to her, and begged her to do him a service. Then he took from his purse six grossi, and said to her, 'Go and buy with this money whatsoever you will.' The maid, who was mightily pleased with the money, took it and replied, 'What would you have me do?' Buondelmonte answered, 'I would that you speak well of me to Madonna Nicolosa, and tell her from me that she is the sole joy of my life, and that it behooves her to take pity upon me.' The maid said, 'How can I ever tell her such a thing? You know that her husband is your enemy.' Buondelmonte went on, 'Trouble not yourself on this score; only tell her what I have told to you,

and let me know what answer she gives you.' Then the maid answered she would do as he desired.

One day it chanced that the lady and the waiting-woman were together at the window, when the last-named let forth a deep sigh; whereupon her mistress asked her what ailed her. The maid answered that it was naught; but the lady went on and said, 'I desire you to tell me at once what is the matter with you, for people do not sigh so deeply without some cause.' The woman answered, 'Madonna, you must pardon me, for I can never tell you.' 'I must assuredly know,' said the lady, 'otherwise I shall be wroth with you.' Then said the woman, 'Since you are so keenly set to know, I will tell you. The truth is, that the young Buondelmonte who lives opposite has begged me, over and over again, to carry a message to you, but I have never found the courage to do this thing.' The lady said, 'Well, and what did this wretch say to you?' The maid replied, 'He bade me tell you that there is no one in the world he holds in such kindly regard as yourself, and that there is nothing he would not do for your sake, so great is the love he has for you. He begs, too, to be suffered to become your faithful servant, for he will be under your command alone, and declares that he shall hold himself as most highly favored if he may only do somewhat to give you pleasure.' To this the lady answered. 'The next time he holds any such discourse with you, see that you give him a slap on the face, and come no more to me with tales like this, for you know well that he is my husband's enemy.' The maid waited a little; then she went out and called Buondelmonte, and said to him, 'She will not hear of you or your doings.' Buondelmonte answered, 'Be not amazed at this. It is what ladies always do the first time; but take care, the next chance that comes, and when she is in good humor, that you tell her this once more, and

that I am mad with love of her. Then I promise you that you shall have a smarter gown than the one you are now wearing.' The maid answered, 'Let me alone to do this.'

One day, when Madonna Nicolosa was about to go to a merry-making, and her maid was helping her to dress, it came to pass that they began to converse on the same matter, and the lady said, 'Has this wretch had any more to say to you?' The maid straightway fell to weeping, and answered, 'I would that I had died the hour and the day I came to abide in this house.' The lady asked her why, and the woman replied, 'Because Buondelmonte has laid siege to me, and I can neither stay at home nor go abroad without finding him hovering about me, standing with his arms crossed, and begging me to tell you how he is pining and wasting away for your sake, and how he is blessed indeed whenever he hears you, or sees you, or listens to others talking about you. In sooth, I have never seen devotion greater than his, and I, for my own part, know not what more to say to you, except to pray you in God's name to relieve me of this trouble and grief; or to give me leave to depart and disappear from the world, or to kill myself, so as to be rid of him; forasmuch as he knows so well how to supplicate me, and speaks so delightfully that I cannot think how anyone can say him no. I wish greatly that it might have been consistent with your honor to have listened to him just once, so that you might see whether I tell the truth or no.' The lady asked, 'Is he really so mad with love of me as you say?' Whereunto the maid answered that he was lovesick a hundredfold more than she had said. Then the lady went on, 'The next time you see him, tell him, from me, to send me a gown of cloth like that which his sister wore this morning in church.' And to this the maid answered she would do as the lady desired.

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Now, when Madonna Nicolosa had gone out, the maid went to Buondelmonte and told him all her mistress had said. 'Wherefore,' she added, 'you must keep your wits about you, and consider what you have to do.' Buondelmonte answered, 'Leave this for me to do, and good luck go with you.' He at once got him a fine gown of the stuff the lady had asked for, and caused it to be steeped and dressed; and, when it seemed to him due time, he gave a sign to the maid and said, 'Carry this to the lady whose servant I am, and tell her that this cloth, and my soul and body, are ever at her disposal.' The maid made haste and bore it quickly to the lady, saying, 'Buondelmonte declares that this cloth, and his soul and body, are ever at your commands.' The lady took the cloth, and, having looked at it, said, 'Now go and tell Buondelmonte I thank him hugely, and bid him be in readiness to come to me whenever I may send for him.' The woman hastened to Buondelmonte and gave him the message, whereto he answered, 'Tell her that I am always ready to do her pleasure.'

It happened that the lady—the better to carry out the design she had formed—feigned to be ill, wherefore the physician was quickly fetched to see her. She declared that she would fain have a room on the ground floor, and her husband at once made them get ready a couch in a room there, which was furnished with everything she required. When this was done, she went to rest therein, together with a chambermaid and her own waiting-woman. Her husband every evening when he came home would ask his wife how she fared, and, after tarrying with her for a short time, would retire to his own room. Every morning and evening the doctor paid his visit, and everything necessary was always at hand. Now, when the lady deemed that the time was fitting, she sent word to Buondelmonte bidding him come to her the following night at nine o'clock; and to him it

seemed that this hour was a thousand years in coming. When it was time, he went in careful wise and well prepared to the door of the lady's house, and when he knocked thereat they opened to him, and he went in. Thereupon the lady took him by the hand and led him into the room, and, having made him sit down beside her, asked him how he fared. Buondelmonte replied, 'Madonna, I fare well enough now that I have won your goodwill.' The lady went on: 'My Buondelmonte, I have kept my bed for the past eight days, so that we might the more privily come together. Now I have let prepare a bath of sweet-smelling herbs, in which I am minded that we should bathe together; and this done, we will go to bed.' Buondelmonte, when he heard this, declared he was ready to do anything which the lady might desire.

She next made him undress himself and get into the bath, which was in a corner of the room; that he should lie down and cover himself within with a linen sheet, and throw a serge cloth over the whole, in order that no heat might escape. When he had undressed and got into the bath, the lady said, 'Now I will undress also and come to you.' Then she took all Buondelmonte's clothes, even his shoes, and put them in a cupboard, and locked the door, and, having put out the light, she threw herself upon the bed, and began to cry aloud, 'Help, help;' and to raise a huge uproar. Buondelmonte jumped out of the bath straightway, and began to search for his clothes without finding them, and, because it was dark, he could not manage to knock at the door; wherefore, helpless and knowing that he had been befooled, he went back to the bath half dead. By this time the whole house was alarmed, and Acciaiuolo and his servants caught up their arms, so that all the household was ready prepared in an instant. The lady's chamber was filled with men and women, and wellnigh

everyone in that quarter of the city armed himself on account of the feud between these two families. Now think what Buondelmonte must have felt when he found himself thus stark naked in his enemy's house, and knew that the room was full of his foes armed to the teeth! Wherefore he commended his soul to God, and with his arms crossed, he awaited his death. The husband asked Nicolosa what ailed her, and she answered, 'I was taken with a sudden illness and vertigo and faintness, so great that meseemed my heart had been turned round in my body.' The husband replied somewhat angrily, 'I feared I should at least find you dead, considering the noise you made.' Thereupon the women round about her began to rub her arms and her feet, while some brought hot cloths, and others rose water; the men having left the room. The husband said, 'This is a sudden illness which has seized my wife, though indeed she has been somewhat ailing for many days past.' Soon afterwards the crowd went away, the husband going up to his room above to get to bed, but several women remained to bear the lady company.

After a little time the lady feigned that her distemper had passed away; whereupon she bade the women around her good night, saying, 'I should be grieved if you were to pass a bad night on my account.' So they departed, leaving her with the chambermaid and the waiting-woman. As soon as they were gone she got up and bade them bring a pair of clean sheets and make the bed afresh; and, when she deemed the time had come, she dismissed the maids, and then, having locked the door and kindled a taper, she went to the bath, where she found Buondelmonte now little better than a dead man. She spoke to him, but he said nothing; and then she got into the bath beside him, embracing him and saying, 'My Buondelmonte, here am I, thy Nicolosa; hast thou not a word to say to me?' And with

these words she took hold of him, and dragged him out of the bath, and put him in the bed, and warmed him, saying the while, 'I am thy Nicolosa, whom thou hast so ardently desired to have all this time; now thou hast me in thy power, and canst do with me as thou wilt.' But he, poor rogue, was so disabled with cold that he could not even speak. After a little, however, he recovered somewhat and said, 'Madonna, be kind enough to give me leave to depart.' Then the lady, seeing what mind he was in, arose, and, having opened the closet, brought forth all his clothes and accoutrements; and he, when he had dressed himself, bade her farewell and said, 'Madonna, may God be good to you, I have had enough this time.' And thus he departed to his home, where he lay for more than a month by reason of the fright he had gotten.

But before long, through the chattering of the women, this story began to be heard in the city without the names of the actors therein: it was simply the tale how a certain lady had put a flout upon a lover of hers, and this became the gossip of all Florence. When Buondelmonte heard it he many a time feigned that it in no way concerned him, and kept silent awaiting his time. And it chanced after a while that peace was restored between the two houses, and they who were formerly foes became friends and brethren, especially Buondelmonte and Nicolosa's husband, for night and day they kept company. One morning Madonna Nicolosa called her maid and said, 'Go and tell Buondelmonte I marvel greatly that, now there be opportunities in plenty, he never sends a word to me.' The maid went and spake thus: 'My lady is greatly surprised that, now you have the chance, you have naught to say to her.' Buondelmonte answered, 'Tell Madonna Nicolosa that I was never so much her slave as I am now, and if she will come one evening and sleep with me, I shall hold myself

highly favored indeed.' The maid went back and bore this message to the lady, who replied, 'Tell him that I am ready to do as he desires, but that he must hit upon a scheme to make my husband sleep abroad some night. Then I will come to him.' The maid went back and told this to Buondelmonte, who was greatly pleased thereat, and said, 'Tell your lady to leave the settlement of all this to me, and that she had better not have any hand therein.'

Buondelmonte forthwith contrived that an invitation to supper should be sent to Acciaiuolo from Camerata, a place about a mile away from Florence, and furthermore arranged with the giver of the feast that the guest should be detained for the night at the inn, and this plan was duly carried out. Then, when the lady's husband had gone out to supper, she went to Buondelmonte's house, as it had been agreed, and he gave her very gracious welcome in a room on the ground floor. Next, after much chatting and diversion, Buondelmonte said to the lady, 'I pray you get to bed;' whereupon she straightway undressed herself and did as he directed. Buondelmonte took all her clothes, and, having opened a coffer, he put them therein, and said to her, 'I must go upstairs now, but I will return anon.' Whereupon the lady bade him go and return quickly. He then departed and locked the door behind him, and, when he had taken off his clothes, he went to bed with his wife, and left Nicolosa by herself. The lady lay expecting Buondelmonte's return, and when he came not she began to be afear'd, remembering the trick she had played him with the bath, and said to herself, 'Of a truth he is minded to take vengeance upon me.' In this plight she got up and searched for her clothes, and, as she could not find them, she became half dead with terror. Then she went back to bed, and in what a pass she found herself everyone may well imagine.

When it was about half-past nine Buondelmonte got up and went out of the house, and as he issued from the door he beheld Acciaiuolo seated upon a nag, bearing a hawk upon his fist, and just coming back from Camerata. After they had saluted one another Acciaiuolo took Buondelmonte by the hand and said, 'I can tell you that we have had fine cheer with capons and roasted quails galore, and the best wine I ever drank. All the evening we had you in mind, and lamented that you could not come with us to this feast, which certes you would have enjoyed amain.' Buondelmonte answered, 'And this last evening I have had to sleep with me the fairest lady in all Florence; nay, I have her still in my room. Never before have I tasted such sweet delight.' Then said Acciaiuolo, 'I would fain see her;' and taking Buondelmonte by the arm, he declared that he would not go away until he should have looked upon the lady. Buondelmonte said, 'I will let you see her willingly, but I desire that you speak not to her in my house. Nevertheless, I will see that, if you are so minded, you shall have her in your own house to-morrow night, when you may take with her whatsoever pleasure you list.' To this the other agreed, and then they went into the room where lay the lady, who, as soon as she perceived that her husband was there, almost fainted, saying to herself, 'I have verily fallen into a nice trap, but 'tis what I deserve,' and she gave herself up for dead. She meantime had thrown herself upon the bed without any great heed of decency, and Buondelmonte and her husband came anear with a lighted torch; but first of all Buondelmonte took hold of the bedclothes, and covered her face therewith, in order that her husband might not know who she was. Then he went to the foot of the bed and began to uncover her feet and legs, one standing on either side of the bed. Buondelmonte said, 'Did you ever see legs so round and pretty as these

legs, which look as if they were of ivory?' Then they went on to uncover her bit by bit as far as her bosom, where were her two little breasts round and firm, the fairest sight ever seen. When they had seen everything there was to be seen up to her bosom, and had let their eyes have free course so as to assure themselves what sweet pleasure might be had with such a lady, Buondelmonte put out the light, and, taking hold of Acciaiuolo, led him forth from the room, having promised him that he should have the lady with him before night. Whereupon Acciaiuolo said, 'Of a surety I never espied a lovelier creature than this one, or one with a skin so fair and white. Where and how did you meet with her?' Buondelmonte answered, 'Trouble not your wits about how I got her;' and thus talking they came to the loggia, and joined a circle of other men who were there, the talk being all about the business of the town council. When Buondelmonte saw that Acciaiuolo was engaged in an argument thereanent, he hurried back to his room, and, having opened the chest, he drew therefrom the lady's clothes, and bade her dress herself, and beckoned to the maid to come and accompany her home. He let her out by a back door into an alley, so that it might appear she was returning from church, and she went back into her house as if naught had happened. In this fashion Buondelmonte took vengeance upon Madonna Nicolosa for the trick she had played him.

ARGUMENT

Don Placido, a Florentine, traveling to Avignon, finds companionship at Nice in Provence with a friar who is also bound to the Pope's court. But it transpires that the friar aforesaid is really a lady of Viterbo, who is going to join a certain cardinal. Of the good fortune which befell Don Placido on the road until he came to Avignon.

WHEN the two lovers returned to their accustomed meeting-place, wherein they found such dear delight, they were glad and gay beyond measure and Saturnina spake thus: 'My Aurette, I am fain to tell you a novel which I doubt not will please you greatly, and this it is.'

In the Val di Pesa, a country district of Florence, there lived in days past a priest named Don Placido, who, on account of certain troubles which befell him, determined to go to Avignon. He betook himself in the first place to Pisa, where he embarked and sailed as far as Nice in Provence, and, having landed, he took lodging in an inn kept by one Bartolomeo da Siena. After he had gone to bed, a worthy fellow, a servant of the host, entered the room and said to the priest, 'Messere, two friars have come here to lodge, and one of them is sorely ill; wherefore, as there is a great scarcity of priests in these parts owing to the recent plague, I beg you to come to him and see how he fares.' The priest answered that he would go willingly, and straightway donned his habit and went to the friar's chamber. One of the friars said to him, 'Messere, I commend to your good offices this father, my companion.' Whereupon the priest sat down upon the bed and began to confess the sick friar, and to remind him of his soul's health, telling him and urging him that it behooved him to make his peace with God. But the good friar seemed indisposed to listen to this counsel, and in a short time died like one in despair.

The other friar, who was the younger of the two, when he saw that his companion was dead, began to weep aloud. The priest consoled him, begging him to take comfort forasmuch as all men were mortal; and after a short time the priest took his leave, and prepared to return to his own chamber. The friar said to him, 'Messere, I beseech you in God's name not to forsake me, but to find means to give burial to this dead man, paying him all due honor,' and with these words he took from his side a purse in which were some thirty florins, and went on, 'Take this; spend what is needful, and pay all charges.' The priest took the purse, and, having called the men and maidservants of the inn and given drink money to each, he despatched them to get in order all things necessary for the burial, so that in the morning everything was in readiness to bury the friar in seemly fashion. When the priest had paid all he went back to the other friar, and comforted him, and gave him back the purse with the residue of the money. But the friar, weeping the while, inquired of him whither he was bound, and the priest replied that he was going to Avignon. Then the friar said, 'I will gladly accompany you;' whereupon the priest agreed, saying, 'I am ready and willing to have your company, for it is better for each of us to travel together than alone.' At these words the friar raised his eyes and seemed in better heart, and the priest, when he had looked at his companion, thought that he had never before seen eyes so beautiful.

To make matters clear I must tell you that this friar was indeed a certain gentlewoman of Viterbo as you will hear later on; but the priest took her for a man, marveling at the same time at those beautiful eyes and that delicate face. As soon as they had agreed to travel in company the friar gave to the priest fifty florins, and said to him, 'Defray all expenses and pay the host

what is due;' which thing the priest did accordingly, and then, having mounted their horses, they rode toward Avignon. The friar, so as not to be recognized, concealed his face with his hat and his cowl, and spake little, and always rode behind; wherefore the priest, deeming that he did this out of grief for his dead comrade, would now and again sing a canzonet and say some jesting words, so as to drive away these melancholy humors; but the friar still remained silent and pensive, and hung his head. Now one evening they arrived at a town called Grasse, and dismounted at an inn kept by a certain widow, whose daughter a short time before had likewise lost her husband by death. This young woman was very gracious and fair to look upon, and, when the travelers had dismounted, she cast many a glance upon the friar, and, marking how graceful and comely was his seeming, she fell in love with him and gazed upon him without ceasing. The friar said to his companion, 'Ask them for a room with two beds in it,' and the hostess at once did his bidding. The daughter of the hostess cooked the supper with her own hands, and did great honor to the guests, talking the while continually with the friar and offering him wine on divers pretenses as he sat at table. The priest perceived what her fancy was, but he dissembled and said to himself, 'In sooth I do not wonder that she should have lost her wits over this youth, for I have not seen so pretty a fellow for many a long day.' When supper was finished the priest went out, so as to leave the others more at their ease, pondering whether this friar might not be the son of some rich man or other, and bound for Avignon to seek preferment, seeing that he had with him plenty of money.

When bedtime had come the priest returned to the inn and said, 'Messere, shall we go to bed?' and the friar agreed; and when they had gone into the chamber

the daughter of the hostess sent by the hand of one of the servants a box of sweetmeats and some excellent wine. The priest laughed and said, 'Of a certainty you must have repeated the paternoster of San Giuliano this morning, for you could not have found a better lodging or a fairer or more gracious hostess;' and he began to jest with the friar, who laughed somewhat, and then they made merry over the wine. The priest went on, 'Certes, I will never again travel hereby without tarrying at this inn; but it will behoove me always to have you with me, for all this honor is done to you, and not to me.' The friar replied, 'In truth this young woman is pleasing enough;' and the priest cried out, 'Would that she were going to sleep between us two to-night!' 'Alack! what is it you say?' said the friar; whereupon the priest replied, 'Wait, and we shall see.'

Meantime the young woman had hidden herself, for she was minded to see in which bed the friar was going to sleep, and she partly saw and heard what went on between these two. With every word he spoke she was more and more pleased with the seemly manners of the friar, and what time he delayed getting into bed seemed to her a thousand years. Of her spying the friar knew nothing, and after further talk he got into one of the beds and the priest into the other. The young woman when she perceived they were both asleep, lighted a candle and went softly to the friar's bed, and began to undress herself, and, this done, she lay down beside him. The friar, being aroused, raised his head at once and saw it was the young woman; whereupon he quickly put out the light, and, having caught up his cloak so as not to be recognized, he got into the priest's bed and lay down on one side thereof. The hostess's daughter was covered with shame and stole out of the room; but the priest neither saw nor heard aught of what had passed, and, having had his first sleep, he felt

a desire to turn over, and in doing this he touched his bedfellow with his arm. He was mightily astonished at this; and when he stretched out his hand and touched a bosom, he knew that it was a woman in bed with him, and made sure that it was the daughter of the hostess, saying to himself. "This girl deems she has gone to bed with the friar, but she has come to me instead, and certes I will not fail to give her that which she has come a-seeking." So he turned to her forthwith, and twice gave her full satisfaction. The friar did not move, and assuredly was well content, while the priest went to sleep again.

When it was near morning the priest awoke, and called his bedfellow, saying, 'Ho there! get up; it is almost day; get up, so that your mother may not know where you have been.' The girl, when she heard what the priest said, saw that he had not recognized her: wherefore she sat up in the bed, and broke out into the heartiest laughter, and then began to dress herself. Having drawn the cowl over her head, she stood before the priest, who at once saw it was the friar, and made the sign of the holy cross. He wellnigh lost his wits for joy when he beheld her twisting up her hair, for her tresses were so fair and bright that they shone like the sun; and, when they had dressed themselves, they let saddle their horses, and called the hostess and paid her what they owed. Then the daughter of the hostess said to the priest, 'Messere, this companion of yours is mighty unsociable.' The priest answered, 'Ah, madonna, you do not rightly know him. I for my part maintain that I never had a more friendly companion; but he is not used to travel.' The young woman replied, 'It indeed seems so.' And then they took their leave and set forth on their journey. The disguised lady rode in advance, and every time she turned round she perceived the priest to be as if lost in thought, for

he was ever thinking over what had happened, which seemed to him a strange thing indeed. Wherefore the friar waited for him, and said, 'Yesterday, Messere, it was I who went with a thoughtful face, to-day it is your turn. Now I desire that you think no more of this matter; and, to banish your troublous thoughts, I will tell you who I am, and whither I am bound. It is indeed true that I am no friar, but a woman, as you know full well. My name is Petruccia, and I am the daughter of Vannicello da Viterbo, who in dying left me under the guardianship of my two brothers. It came to pass that when Pope Urban traveled through those parts, he tarried as you may have heard, divers days at Viterbo, and during this visit a certain cardinal, whom you will see hereafter, came by God's will to lodge in our house, and became so greatly enamored of me, and pressed me so hotly, that I yielded myself to him. When the court moved on into Provence, the Cardinal took me with him, keeping me always by his side, and giving me very honorable treatment, and loving me better than himself. But when the pope went to Ponti di Sorga my lover accompanied him, and left me behind in Avignon, with two waiting women and an equerry. It was then that one of my brothers, on his return from San Jacopo, arrived in Avignon, and began to search for me; and one Saturday morning, when I had gone to hear mass in the church of Sant Asideri, this brother of mine went thither likewise, taking with him an intimate friend. When his eyes and mine met, he recognized me, and having seized me, bore me away forthwith down to the Rhone, where he got ready a boat for his own voyage. I was taken on board this, and we did not halt until we reached Arles. Then we traveled by Marseilles, Nice, Genoa, Leghorn, and Corneto, my brother being minded many times during the voyage to cast me into the sea, and this, indeed, he

would have done but for his friend, who held him back. While we were together on the boat this gentleman became enamored of me, and asked me in marriage of my brother, who readily gave consent, and I was willing to take him as my husband. Having come to Viterbo he made me his wife with great rejoicing, and took me to his house, but by the will of Fortune he died a month later, and it is because of his death that I went away; for, he being dead, I was forced to go back to live with my brothers, and I abode with them until lately in great weariness and tribulation. My two sisters-in-law compelled me to be their servant, and for the slightest fault they reproved me, and called me a lewd woman, wherefore I suffered greatly. One day, however, I chanced to see pass a courier bound for Avignon, and to him I gave a letter addressed to Monsignore, in which I set forth all that had befallen me, and told him that if he wished to have me back he had better send for me by some person in whom I could trust. Whereupon he sent the same friar who died at Nice, a worthy man, to whom he promised to give the first bishopric which might fall vacant, if I should be brought safely to Avignon. The friar arrived at Viterbo, and found occasion to speak with me in the church of the Augustinians, where he showed me a letter under the Cardinal's signature and other testimonies, and then we determined what course we should follow. After our plans were set in order, my sister-in-law and some other ladies and I myself went one day to the baths of Asinella, and when all my companions had gone into the water, I made pretense of going out for a little, and, this done, I withdrew quickly and went into a wood, where the friar was awaiting me. I stripped off my woman's garb, and donned a habit such as friars wear. Then we mounted our horses, which were ready for us, and in about three hours we came to Corneto, where the

friar had let prepare a brigantine, upon which we embarked forthwith, and sent back our horses. The sailors put out to sea, and we sailed on till we came to Nice in Provence, the friar being afflicted so sorely with seasickness that he died, as you yourself saw—in sooth, he died out of despair that he was unable to take me to the lord cardinal. Now you know who I am, and whither I am bound; wherefore let us have a care to give ourselves a merry time on the road, and cast all trouble to the winds.’ And so indeed it was, forasmuch as long as they fared together they took all the joy they were fain of, both at board and in bed, singing and jesting and making the long days seem short through the merriment of their life; indeed, the love between them waxed so mightily that it would be impossible to tell of all the sport they had together, nor was there ever known so genuine a comradeship as theirs. And it chanced, when they arrived at Avignon, that they dismounted at an inn which stood hard by the palace of the Cardinal, and when night was come the so-called friar said to the priest, ‘Say that you are my cousin, and that you have come hither in my company, and leave the rest to me;’ and the priest did as he was directed. Then the lady sent to the Cardinal’s palace for one of the servants who was named Rubinetto, who, when he had come, straightway saw who the friar really was and rejoiced greatly. Then he ran over to the Cardinal, saying, ‘Monsignore, Petruccia has come back.’ Whereupon the Cardinal was hugely pleased, and said ‘See that she be here when I return from the court, and do not fail in this.’ The servant brought her woman’s attire, and the priest helped to dress her in the same, which indeed sat very jauntily upon her. And though the priest had fallen in love with her when he first beheld her in the friar’s habit, he found her a thousand-fold more lovable in woman’s weeds, and that evening

they exchanged a thousand kisses, shedding many tears the while. And in due time the servant came to fetch her, and led her away into the chamber of the Cardinal, who, as soon as he returned, asked the servant whether Petruccia was there, and when he heard that she had come, he ran straightway to the room, and kissed and embraced her a hundred times.

Then she told him the whole adventure, how her brother had taken her away by force, and said, 'For greater safety I brought with me a cousin of mine who is a priest, and he out of regard for you has never left me, but has brought me to you with no small trouble.' The next morning the Cardinal sent for the priest and thanked him, and, having made him note down all he had to ask, the Cardinal granted him every favor he could wish for; moreover, he gave the priest raiment, and did him the greatest honor what time he abode in Avignon. So great was the love Petruccia had for the priest, that she refrained not by night or by day from commending him to the Cardinal, who came to hold him in such high esteem that he promoted him to a leading place in his house. Now it happened that after a time the priest got what he wanted from the court of Avignon, wherefore he determined to return to his home, which thing proved a cruel sorrow to Petruccia, but when she saw he was minded thereto she submitted. The day of his departure she led him to her chest, in which was a casket full of florins, and bade him take as many of these as he would. The priest replied, 'My Petruccia, it is enough for me that I bear away with me your goodwill; that is all I desire; gifts of other kind I have no mind for.' Petruccia, when she saw how warm was the love the priest bore her, drew from her finger a very fine ring, and gave it to him, saying, 'Take this, and wear it for the love of me, and never part with it till you shall find some woman fairer than I am.' The

priest answered, 'These are mere words. You had better keep the ring, forasmuch as to my mind there was never yet born a woman more beautiful and lovesome than you.' Then the lady with many tears clasped him round the neck with her arms, and he clasped her, kissing each other often on the mouth and pressing each other's hands. So they said farewell, and the priest, when he had taken his leave of the Cardinal, returned to his home, good luck attending him.

EPISODES FROM
ORLANDO FURIOSO

BY
LUDOVICO ARIOSTO
(1474-1533)

[To be read at the end of page 30.]

The gentle dame began: "Twas in the spring
Of life I to the palace made resort;
There served long time the daughter of the king,
And grew with her in growth, well placed in court.
When cruel Love, my fortune envying,
Willed I should be his follower and his sport;
And made, beyond each Scottish lord and knight,
Albany's duke find favor in my sight.

"And for he seemed to cherish me above
All mean, his love a love as ardent bred.
We hear, indeed, and see, but do not prove
Man's faith, nor is his bosom's purpose read.
Believing still, and yielding to my love,
I ceased not till I took him to my bed;
Nor, of all chambers, in that evil hour,
Marked I was in Genevra's priviest bower.

"Where, hoarded, she with careful privacy
Preserved whatever she esteemed most rare;
There many time she slept. A gallery
From thence projected into open air.
Here oft I made my lover climb to me,
And (what he was to mount) a hempen stair,
When him I to my longing arms would call,
From the projecting balcony let fall.

“For here my passion I as often fed
As good Genevra’s absence made me bold;
Who with the varying season changed her bed,
To shun the burning heat or pinching cold,
And Albany, unseen and safely sped;
For, fronting a dismantled street, and old,
Was built that portion of the palace bright;
Nor any went that way by day or night.

“So was for many days and months maintained
By us, in secrecy, the amorous game;
Still grew my love, and such new vigor gained,
I in my inmost bosom felt the flame;
And that he little loved, and deeply feigned
Weened not, so was I blinded to my shame:
Though, in a thousand certain signs betrayed,
The faithless knight his base deceit bewrayed.

“After some days, of fair Genevra he
A suitor showed himself; I cannot say
If this began before he sighed for me,
Or after of this love he made assay:
But judge, alas! with what supremacy
He ruled my heart, how absolute his sway!
Since this he owned, and thought no shame to move
Me to assist him in his second love.

“Unlike what he bore me, he said, indeed,
That was not true which he for her displayed;
But so pretending love, he hoped to speed,
And celebrate due spousals with the maid.
He with her royal sire might well succeed,
Were she consenting to the boon he prayed;
For after our good king, for wealth and birth,
In all the realm, was none of equal worth.

"Me he persuades, if through my ministry
 He the king's son-in-law elected were,
 For I must know he next the King would be
 Advanced as high as subject could repair,
 The merit should be mine, and ever he
 So great a benefit in mind would bear;
 And he would cherish me above his bride,
 And more than every other dame beside.

"I, who to please him was entirely bent,
 Who never could or would gainsay his will,
 Upon those days alone enjoy content,
 When I find means his wishes to fulfil:
 And snatch at all occasions which present
 A mode his praise and merits to instil:
 And for my lover with all labor strain,
 And industry, Genevra's love to gain.

"With all my heart, in furtherance of his suit,
 I wrought what could be done, God truly knows;
 But with Genevra this produced no fruit,
 Nor her to grace my duke could I dispose.
 For that another love had taken root
 In her, whose every fond affection flows
 Toward a gentle knight of courteous lore,
 Who sought our Scotland from a distant shore:

"And with a brother, then right young, to stay
 In our King's court, came out of Italy;
 And there of knightly arms made such assay,
 Was none in Britain more approved than he;
 Prized by the King, who (no ignoble pay)
 Rewarding him like his nobility,
 Bestowed upon the youth, with liberal hand,
 Burghs, baronies, and castles, woods and land.

“Dear to the monarch, to the daughter still
This lord was dearer, Ariodantes hight.
Her with affection might his valor fill;
But knowledge of his love brought more delight.
Nor old Vesuvius, nor Sicilia’s hill,
Nor Troy-town, ever, with a blaze so bright,
Flamed, as with all his heart, the damsel learned,
For love of her young Ariodantes burned.

“The passion that she bore the lord, preferred
And loved with perfect truth and all her heart,
Was the occasion I was still unheard;
Nor hopeful answer would she e’er impart;
And still the more my lover’s suit I stirred,
And to obtain his guerdon strove with art,
Him she would censure still, and ever more
Was strengthened in the hate she nursed before.

“My wayward lover often I excite
So vain and bootless an emprise to quit;
Nor idly hope to turn her steadfast sprite,
Too deeply with another passion smit;
And make apparent to the Scottish knight,
Ariodantes such a flame had lit
In the young damsel’s breast, that seas in flood
Would not have cooled one whit her boiling blood.

“This Polinesso many times had heard
From me (for such the Scottish baron’s name),
Well warranted by sight as well as word,
How ill his love was cherished by the dame.
To see another to himself preferred
Not only quenched the haughty warrior’s flame,
But the fond love which in his bosom burned
Into spiteful rage and hatred turned.

"Between Genevra and her faithful knight
 Such discord and ill will he schemed to shed,
 And put betwixt the pair such foul despite,
 No time should heal the quarrel he had bred;
 Bringing such scandal on that damsel bright,
 The stain should cleave to her, alive or dead;
 Nor, bent to wreck her on this fatal shelf,
 Counseled with me, or other but himself.

" 'Dalinda mine,' he said, his project brewed
 (Dalinda is my name), ' you needs must know,
 That from the root although the trunk be hewed,
 Successive suckers many times will grow.
 Thus my unhappy passion is renewed,
 Tenacious still of life, and buds; although
 Cut off by ill success, with new increase,
 Nor, till I compass my desire, will cease.

" 'Nor hope of pleasure this so much has wrought,
 As that to compass my design would please;
 And, if not in effect, at least in thought
 To thrive, would interpose some little ease.
 Then every time your bower by me is sought,
 When in her bed Genevra slumbers, seize
 What she puts off, and be it still your care
 To dress yourself in all her daily wear.

" 'Dispose your locks and deck yourself as she
 Goes decked; and, as you can, with cunning heed,
 Imitate her; then to the gallery
 You, furnished with the corded stair, shall speed:
 I shall ascend it in the phantasy
 That you are she, of whom you wear the weed;
 And hope that, putting on myself this cheat,
 I in short time shall quench my amorous heat.'

“So said the knight; and I, who was distraught,
And all beside myself, was not aware
That the design, in which he help besought,
Was manifestly but too foul a snare;
And in Genevra’s clothes disguised, as taught,
Let down (so oft I used) the corded stair.
Nor I the traitor’s foul deceit perceived,
Until the deadly mischief was achieved.

“The Duke, this while, to Ariodantes’ ears
Had these, or other words like these, addressed;
(For leagued in friendship were the cavaliers,
Till, rivals, they pursued this common quest):
‘I marvel, since you are of all my peers
He whom I most have honored and caressed,
And held in high regard, and cherished still,
You should my benefits repay so ill.

“ ‘I am assured you comprehend and know
Mine and Genevra’s love, and old accord;
And, in legitimate espousal, how
I am about to claim her from my lord.
Then why disturb my suit, and why bestow
Your heart on her who offers no reward?
By Heaven, I should respect your claim and place,
Were your condition mine, and mine your case.’

“ ‘And I,’ cried Ariodantes, ‘marvel more’
(In answer to the Scottish lord) ‘at you,
Since I of her enamored was, before
That gentle damsel ever met your view;
And know, you are assured how evermore
We two have loved—was never love more true—
Are certain she alone would share my lot;
And are as well assured she loves you not.

" 'Why have not I from you the same respect,
 To which, for friendship past, you would pretend
 From me; and I should bear you in effect,
 If your hope stood more fair to gain its end?
 No less than you, to wed her I expect;
 And if your fortunes here my wealth transcend,
 As favored of the King as you, above
 You, am I happy in his daughter's love.'

" 'Of what a strange mistake,' to him replied
 The Duke, 'your foolish passion is the root!
 You think yourself beloved; I, on my side,
 Believe the same; this try we by the fruit.
 You of your own proceeding nothing hide,
 And I will tell the secrets of my suit;
 And let the man who proves least favored, yield,
 Provide himself elsewhere, and quit the field.

" 'I am prepared, if such your wish, to swear
 Nothing of what is told me to reveal;
 And will that you assure me, for your share,
 You shall what I recount as well conceal.'
 Uniting in the pact, the rival pair
 Their solemn vows upon the Bible seal;
 And when they had the mutual promise plighted,
 Ariodantes first his tale recited.

"Then plainly, and by simple facts averred,
 How with Genevra stood his suit, avows;
 And how, engaged by writing and by word,
 She swore she would not be another's spouse.
 How, if to him the Scottish King demurred,
 Virgin austerity she ever vows;
 And other bridal bond for aye eschewed,
 To pass her days in barren solitude.

“Then added, how he hoped by worth, which he
Had more than once avouched, with knightly brand,
And yet might vouch, to the prosperity
And honor of the King, and of his land,
To please so well that monarch, as to be
By him accounted worthy of the hand
Of his fair child, espoused with his consent;
Since he in this her wishes would content.

“Then so concludes—‘I stand upon this ground,
Nor I intruder fear, encroaching nigh;
Nor seek I more; ’tis here my hopes I bound;
Nor, striving for Genevra’s love, would I
Seek surer sign or it than what is found,
By God allowed, in wedlock’s lawful tie;
And other suit were hopeless, am I sure,
So excellent she is, and passing pure.’

“When Ariodantes had, with honest mind,
Told what reward he hoped should quit his pain,
False Polinesso, who before designed
To make Genevra hateful to her swain,
Began: ‘Alas! you still are far behind
My hopes, and shall confess your own are vain
And say, as I the root shall manifest
Of my good fortune, I alone am blest.

“‘With you Genevra feigns, nor pays nor prizes
Your passion, which with hopes and words is fed;
And, more than this, your foolish love despises:
And this to me the damsel oft has said,
Of hers I am assured; of no surmises,
Vain, worthless words, or idle promise bred.
And I to you the fact in trust reveal,
Though this I should in better faith conceal.

" 'There passes not a month, but in that space
 Three nights, four, six, and often ten, the fair
 Receives me with that joy in her embrace,
 Which seems to second so the warmth we share,
 This you may witness, and shall judge the case;
 If empty hopes can with my bliss compare.
 Then since my happier fortune is above
 Your wishes, yield, and seek another love.'

" 'This will I not believe,' in answer cried
 Ariodantes, 'well assured you lie,
 And that you have this string of falsehoods tied,
 To scare me from the dear emprise I try.
 But charge, so passing foul, you shall abide,
 And vouch what you have said in arms; for I
 Not only on your tale place no reliance;
 But as a traitor hurl you my defiance.'

"To him rejoined the Duke, 'I ween 'twere ill
 To take the battle upon either part,
 Since surer mean our purpose may fulfil;
 And if it please, my proof I can impart.'
 Ariodantes trembled, and a chill
 Went through his inmost bones; and sick at heart,
 Had he in full believed his rival's boast,
 Would on the spot have yielded up the ghost.

"With wounded heart, and faltering voice, pale face,
 And mouth of gall, he answered, 'When I see
 Proofs of thy rare adventure, and the grace
 With which the fair Genevra honors thee,
 I promise to forego the fruitless chase
 Of one, to thee so kind, so cold to me.
 But think not that thy story shall avail,
 Unless my very eyes confirm the tale.'

“To warn you in due time shall be my care,”
Said Polinesso, and so went his way.
Two nights were scarcely passed, ere his repair
To the known bower was fixed for the assay.
And, ready now to spring his secret snare,
He sought his rival on the appointed day,
And him to hide, the night ensuing, prayed
I’ the street, which none their habitation made.

“And to the youth a station over-right
The balcony, to which he clambered, shows.
Ariodantes weened, this while, the knight
Would him to seek that hidden place dispose,
As one well suited to his fell despite,
And, bent to take his life, this ambush chose,
Under the false pretense to make him see
What seemed a sheer impossibility.

“To go the peer resolved, but in such guise,
He should not be with vantage overlaid;
And should he be assaulted by surprise,
He need not be by fear of death dismay’d.
He had a noble brother, bold and wise,
First of the court in arms; and on his aid,
Lurcanio hight, relied with better heart
Than if ten others fought upon his part.

“He called him to his side, and willed him take
His arms; and to the place at evening led:
Yet not his secret purpose would he break,
Nor this to him, or other would have read:
Him a stone’s throw removed he placed, and spake:
‘Come if thou hearest me cry,’ the warrior said;
‘But as thou lov’st me, whatsoe’er befall,
Come not and move not, brother, till I call.’

“‘Doubt not,’ the valiant brother said, ‘but go;’

And thither went that baron silently,
And hid within the lonely house, and low,
Over against my secret gallery.
On the other side approached the fraudulent foe,
So pleased to work Genevra’s infamy;
And, while I nothing of the cheat divine,
Beneath my bower renews the wonted sign,

“And I in costly robe, in which were set
Fair stripes of gold upon a snowy ground,
My tresses gathered in a golden net,
Shaded with tassels of vermilion round,
Mimicking fashions that were only met
In fair Genevra, at the accustomed sound,
The gallery mount, constructed in such mode,
As upon every side my person showed.

“This while Lurcanio, either with a view
To snares which might beset his brother’s feet,
Or with the common passion to pursue,
And play the spy on other, where the street
Was darkest, and its deepest shadows threw,
Followed him softly to his dim retreat:
And not ten paces from the knight aloof,
Bestowed himself beneath the selfsame roof.

“Suspecting nought, I seek the balcony,
In the same habits which I mentioned, dressed;
As more than once or twice (still happily)
I did before; meanwhile the goodly vest
Was in the moonlight clearly seen, and I,
In aspect not unlike her, in the rest
Resembling much Genevra’s shape and cheer,
One visage well another might appear.

"So much the more, that there was ample space
Between the palace and the ruined row:
Hence the two brothers, posted in that place,
Were lightly cheated by the lying show.
Now put yourself in his unhappy case,
And figure what the wretched lover's woe,
When Polinesso climbed the stair, which I
Cast down to him, and scaled the gallery.

"Arrived, my arms about his neck I throw,
Weening that we unseen of others meet,
And kiss his lips and face with loving show,
As him I hitherto was wont to greet;
And he essayed, with more than wonted glow,
Me to caress, to mask his hollow cheat.
Led to the shameful spectacle, aghast,
That other, from afar, viewed all that passed.

"And fell into such fit of deep despair,
He there resolved to die; and, to that end,
Planted the pommel of his falchion bare
I' the ground, its point against his breast to bend.
Lurcanio, who with marvel by that stair,
Saw Polinesso to my bower ascend,
But knew not who the wight, with ready speed
Sprang forward, when he saw his brother's deed.

"And hindered him in that fell agony
From turning his own hand against his breast.
Had the good youth been later, or less nigh,
To his assistance he had vainly pressed.
Then, 'Wretched brother, what insanity.'
He cried, 'your better sense has dispossessed?
Die for a woman! rather let her kind
Be scattered like the mist before the wind!'

“Compass her death! ’tis well deserved; your own
 Reserve, as due to more illustrious fate.
 ’Twas well to love, before her fraud was shown,
 But she, once loved, now more deserves your hate:
 Since, witnessed by your eyes, to you is known
 A wanton of what sort you worshipped late.
 Her fault before the Scottish King to attest,
 Reserve those arms you turn against your breast.’

“Ariodantes, so surprised, forewent,
 Joined by his brother, the design in show;
 But resolute to die, in his intent
 Was little shaken. Rising thence to go,
 He bears away a heart not simply rent,
 But dead and withered with excess of woe;
 Yet better comfort to Lurcanio feigns,
 As if the rage were spent which fired his veins.

“The morn ensuing, without further say
 To his good brother, or to man beside,
 He from the city took his reckless way
 With deadly desperation for his guide;
 Nor, save the Duke and knight, for many a day
 Was there who knew what moved the youth to ride:
 And in the palace, touching this event,
 And in the realm, was various sentiment.

“But eight days past or more, to Scotland’s court
 A traveler came, and to Genevra he
 Related tidings of disastrous sort;
 That Ariodantes perished in the sea;
 Drowned of his own free will was the report,
 No wind to blame for the calamity!
 Since from a rock, which over ocean hung,
 Into the raging waves he headlong sprung;

"Who said before he reached that frowning crest,
To me, whom he encountered by the way,
'Come with me, that your tongue may manifest,
And what betides me to Genevra say;
And tell her, too, the occasion of the rest,
Which you shall witness without more delay;
In having seen too much, the occasion lies;
Happy had I been born without these eyes!

" 'By chance, upon a promontory we
Were standing, oversight the Irish shore;
When, speaking thus on that high headland, he
Plunged from a rock amid the watery roar.
I saw him leap, and left him in the sea;
And, hurrying thence, to you the tidings bore.'
Genevra stood amazed, her color fled,
And, at the fearful tale, remained half dead.

"O God! what said, what did she, when alone,
She on her faithful pillow laid her head!
She beat her bosom, and she tore her gown,
And in despite her golden tresses shed,
Repeating often, in bewildered tone,
The last sad words that Ariodantes said;
That the sole source of such despair, and such
Disaster, was that he had seen too much.

"Wide was the rumor scattered that the peer
Had slain himself for grief; nor was the cry
By courtly dame, or courtly cavalier,
Or by the monarch, heard with tearless eye.
But, above all the rest, his brother dear
Was whelmed with sorrow of so deep a dye,
That, bent to follow him, he well nigh turned
His hand against himself, like him he mourned.

"And many times repeating in his thought,
 It was Genevra who his brother slew,
 Who was to self-destruction moved by nought
 But her ill deed, which he was doomed to view,
 So on his mind the thirst of vengeance wrought,
 And so his grief his reason overthrew;
 That he thought little, graced of each estate,
 To encounter King and people's common hate;

"And, when the throng was fullest in the hall,
 Stood up before the Scottish King, and said,
 'Of having marred my brother's wits withal,
 Sir King, and him to his destruction led,
 Your daughter only can I guilty call;
 For in his inmost soul such sorrow bred
 The having seen her little chastity,
 He loathed existence, and preferred to die.

"'He was her lover; and for his intent
 Was honest, this I seek not, I, to veil;
 And to deserve her by his valor meant
 Of thee, if faithful service might avail;
 But while he stood aloof, and dared but scent
 The blossoms, he beheld another scale,
 Scale the forbidden tree with happier boot,
 And bear away from him the wished-for fruit.'

"Then added, how into the gallery came
 Genevra, and how dropped the corded stair;
 And how into the chamber of the dame
 Had climbed a leman of that lady fair;
 Who, for disguise (he knew not hence his name),
 Had changed his habits, and concealed his hair:
 And, in conclusion, vowed that every word
 So said, he would avouch with lance and sword.

"You may divine how grieves the sire, distraught
With woe, when he the accusation hears:
As well that what he never could have thought,
He of his daughter learns with wondering ears,
As that he knows, if succor be not brought
By cavalier, that in her cause appears,
Who may upon Lurcanio prove the lie,
He cannot choose, but doom the maid to die.

"I do not think our Scottish law to you
Is yet unknown, which sentences to fire
The miserable dame, or damsel, who
Grants other than her wedded lord's desire.
She dies, unless a champion, good and true,
Arm on her side before a month expire;
And her against the accuser base maintain
Unmeriting such death, and free from stain."

[To be read after the second stanza on page 36.]

Meanwhile the courser by the myrtle's side,
Whom he left stabled in the cool retreat,
Started at something in the wood descried,
Scared by I know not what; and in his heat
So made the myrtle shake where he was tied,
He brought a shower of leaves about his feet;
He made the myrtle shake and foliage fall,
But, struggling, could not loose himself withal.

As in a stick to feed the chimney rent,
Where scanty pith ill fills the narrow sheath,
The vapor, in its little channel pent,
Struggles, tormented by the fire beneath;
And, till its prisoned fury find a vent,
Is heard to hiss and bubble, sing and seethe.
So the offended myrtle inly pined,
Groaned, murmured, and at last unclosed its rind:

And hence a clear, intelligible speech
 Thus issued, with a melancholy sound;
 "If, as thy cheer and gentle presence teach,
 Thou courteous art and good, his rein unbound,
 Release me from this monster, I beseech:
 Griefs of my own inflict sufficient wound:
 Nor need I, compassed with such ills about,
 Other new pain to plague me from without."

At the first sound, Rogero turns to see
 Whence came the voice, and, in unused surprise,
 Stands, when he finds it issues from the tree;
 And swiftly to remove the courser hies.
 Then, with a face suffused with crimson, he
 In answer to the groaning myrtle cries:
 "Pardon! and, whatsoe'er thou art, be good,
 Spirit of man, or goddess of the wood!

"And if I now or ever the despite
 I did thee can repair, or aid impart,
 I, by that lady dear, my promise plight,
 Who in her keeping has my better part,
 To strive with word and deed, till thou requite
 The service done with praise and grateful heart."
 Rogero said; and, as he closed his suit,
 That gentle myrtle shook from top to root.

Next drops were seen to stand upon the bark,
 As juice is sweated by the sapling-spray,
 New-severed, when it yields to flame and spark,
 Sometime in vain kept back and held at bay.
 And next the voice began; "My story dark,
 Forced by thy courteous deed, I shall display—
 What once I was—by whom, through magic lore,
 Changed to a myrtle on the pleasant shore.

"A peer of France, Astolpho was my name,
Whilom a paladin, sore feared in fight;
Cousin I was to two of boundless fame,
Orlando and Rinaldo. I by right
Looked to all England's crown; my lawful claim
After my royal father, Otho hight.
More dames than one my beauty served to warm,
And in conclusion wrought my single harm.

"Returning from those isles, whose eastern side
The billows of the Indian ocean beat,
Where good Rinaldo and more knights beside
With me were pent in dark and hollow seat,
Thence, rescued by illustrious Brava's pride,*
Whose prowess freed us from that dark retreat,
Westward I fared along the sandy shores,
On which the stormy north his fury pours.

"Pursuing thus our rugged journey, we
Came (such our evil doom) upon the strand,
Where stood a mansion seated by the sea.
Puissant Alcina owned the house and land.
We found her where, without her dwelling, she
Had taken on the beach her lonely stand;
And though nor hook nor sweeping net she bore,
What fish she willed, at pleasure drew to shore.

"She came toward us with a cheerful face,
With graceful gestures, and a courteous air,
And said: 'So you my lodging please to grace,
Sir cavalier, and will with me repair,
You shall behold the wonders of my chase,
And note the different sorts of fish I snare;
Shaggy or smooth, or clad in scales of light,
And more in number than the stars of night:

*Orlando.

"And would you hear a mermaid sing so sweet,
 That the rude sea grows civil at her song,
 Wont at this hour her music to repeat,
 (With that she showed the monster huge and long
 —I said it seemed an island—as her seat)
 Pass with me where she sings the shoals among.'
 I, that was always wilful, at her wish,
 I now lament my rashness, climb the fish.

"Because in wickedness and vice were bred
 The pair, as chaste and good they loath the dame.
 But, to return to what I lately said,
 And to relate how I a plant became;
 Me, full of love, the kind Alcina fed
 With full delights; nor I a weaker flame
 For her within my burning heart did bear,
 Beholding her so courteous and so fair.

"Clasped in her dainty limbs, and lapt in pleasure,
 I weened that I each separate good had won,
 Which to mankind is dealt in different measure,
 Little or more to some, and much to none.
 I evermore contemplated my treasure,
 Nor France nor aught beside I thought upon:
 In her my every fancy, every hope
 Centered and ended as their common scope.

"By her I was as much beloved, or more;
 Nor did Alcina now for other care;
 She left her every lover; for before,
 Others, in truth, the fairy's love did share:
 I was her close adviser evermore;
 And served by her, where they commanded were.
 With me she counseled, and to me referred;
 Nor, night nor day, to other spake a word.

"Why touch my wounds, to aggravate my ill,
And that, alas! without the hope of cure?
Why thus the good possessed remember still,
Amid the cruel penance I endure?
When kindest I believed Alcina's will,
And fondly deemed my happiness secure,
From me the heart she gave, the fay withdrew,
And yielded all her soul to love more new.

"Late I discerned her light and fickle bent,
Still loving and unloving at a heat:
Two months, I reigned not more, no sooner spent,
Than a new paramour assumed my seat;
And me, with scorn, she doomed to banishment,
From her fair grace cast out. 'Tis then I weet
I share a thousand lovers' fate, whom she
Had to like pass reduced, all wrongfully.

"And these, because they should not scatter bruits,
Roaming the world, of her lascivious ways,
She, up and down the fruitful soil, transmutes
To olive, palm, or cedar, firs or bays.
These, as you see me changed, Alcina roots;
While this transformed into a monster strays;
Another melts into a liquid rill;
As suits that haughty fairy's wanton will.

"Thou, too, that to this fatal isle art led
By way unwonted and till now unknown,
That some possessor of the fairy's bed
May be for thee transformed to wave or stone,
Thou shalt, with more than mortal pleasures fed,
Have from Alcina signiory and throne;
But shalt be sure to join the common flock,
Transformed to beast or fountain, plant or rock.

"I willingly to thee this truth impart,
 Not that I hope with profit to advise:
 Yet 'twill be better, that informed, in part,
 Of her false ways, she harm not by surprise.
 Perhaps, as faces differ, and in art
 And wit of man an equal difference lies,
 Thou may'st some remedy perchance apply
 To the ill, which thousand others could not fly."

The good Rogero, who from Fame had learned
 That he was cousin to the dame he wooed,
 Lamented much the sad Astolpho, turned
 From his true form to barren plant and rude:
 And for her love, for whom so sore he burned,
 Would gladly serve the stripling if he could:
 But, witless how to give the wished relief,
 Might but console the unhappy warrior's grief.

As best he could, he strove to soothe his pain;
 Then asked him, if to Logistil's retreat
 Were passage, whether over hill or plain;
 That he might so eschew Alcina's seat.
 "There was a way," the myrtle said again,
 "But rough with stones, and rugged to the feet,
 If he, some little further to the right,
 Would scale the Alpine mountain's very height:

"But that he must not think he shall pursue
 The intended journey far; since by the way
 He will encounter with a frequent crew,
 And fierce, who serve as rampart to the fay,
 That block the road against the stranger, who
 Would break her bounds, and the deserter stay."
 Rogero thanked the tree for all, and taught,
 Departed thence with full instructions fraught.

The courser from the myrtle he untied,
And by the bridle led behind him still;
Nor would he, as before, the horse bestride,
Lest he should bear him off against his will:
He mused this while how safely he might find
A passage to the land of Logistil;
Firm in his purpose every nerve to strain,
Lest empire over him Alcina gain.

He to remount the steed, and through the air
To spur him to a new career again
Now thought; but doubted next, in fear to fare
Worse on the courser, restive to the rein.
"No, I will win by force the mountain-stair,"
Rogeró said; (but the resolve was vain)
Nor by the beach two miles his way pursued,
Ere he Alcina's lovely city viewed.

A lofty wall at distance meets his eye
Which girds a spacious town within its bound;
It seems as if its summit touched the sky,
And all appears like gold from top to ground.
Here some one says it is but alchemy
—And haply his opinion is unsound—
And haply he more wittily divines:
For me; I deem it gold because it shines.

When he drew near the city-walls, so bright,
The world has not their equal, he the straight
And spacious way deserts, the way which dight
Across the plain, conducted to the gate;
And by that safer road upon the right,
Strains now against the mountain; but, in wait,
Encounters soon the crowd of evil foes,
Who furiously the Childe's advance oppose.

. . .

Was never yet beheld a stranger band,
 Of mien more hideous, or more monstrous shape.
 Formed downward from the neck like men, he scanned
 Some with the head of cat, and some of ape:
 With hoof of goat that other stamped the sand;
 While some seemed centaurs, quick in fight and rape;
 Naked, or mantled in outlandish skin,
 These doting sires, those striplings bold in sin.

This gallops on a horse without a bit;
 This backs the sluggish ass, or bullock slow;
 These mounted on the croup of centaur sit:
 Those perched on eagle, crane, or estridge, go.
 Some male, some female, some hermaphrodit,
 These drain the cup and those the bugle blow.
 One bore a corded ladder, one a hook,
 One a dull file, or bar of iron shook.

The captain of this crew, which blocked the road,
 Appeared, with monstrous paunch and bloated face;
 Who a slow tortoise for a horse bestrode,
 That passing sluggishly with him did pace:
 Down looked, some here, some there, sustained the load,
 For he was drunk, and kept him in his place
 Some wipe his brows and chin from sweat which ran,
 And others with their vests his visage fan.

One, with a human shape and feet, his crest,
 Fashioned like hound, in neck and ears and head,
 Bayed at the gallant Childe with angry quest,
 To turn him to the city whence he fled.
 "That will I never, while of strength possessed
 To brandish this," the good Rogero said:
 With that his trenchant falchion he displayed,
 And pointed at him full the naked blade.

That monster would have smote him with a spear,
But swiftly at his foe Rogero sprung,
Thrust at his paunch, and drove his falchion sheer
Through his pierced back a palm; his buckler flung
Before him, and next sallied there and here:
But all too numerous was the wicked throng.
Now grappled from behind, now punched before,
He stands, and plies the crowd with warfare sore.

One to the teeth, another to the breast,
Of that foul race he cleft; since no one steeled
In mail, his brows with covering helmet dressed,
Or fought, secured by corslet or by shield;
Yet is he so upon all quarters pressed,
That it would need the Childe to clear the field,
And to keep off the wicked crew that swarms,
More than Briareus' hundred hands and arms.

If he had thought the magic shield to show,
(I speak of that the necromancer bore,
Which dazed the sight of the astonished foe,
Left at his saddle by the wizard Moor)
That hideous band, in sudden overthrow,
Blinded by this had sunk the knight before.
But haply he despised such mean as vile,
And would prevail by valor, not by guile.

This as it may: the Childe would meet his fate,
Ere by so vile a band be prisoner led;
When, lo! forth-issuing from the city's gate,
Whose wall appeared like shining gold I said,
Two youthful dames, not born in low estate,
If measured by their mien and garb, nor bred
By swain, in early wants and troubles versed;
But amid princely joys in palace nursed!

On unicorn was seated either fair,
 A beast than spotless ermine yet more white;
 So lovely were the damsels, and so rare
 Their garb, and with such graceful fashion dight,
 That he who closely viewed the youthful pair,
 Would need a surer sense than mortal sight,
 To judge between the two. With such a mien
 Embodied grace and beauty would be seen.

Into the mead rode this and the other dame,
 Where the foul crew opposed the Childe's retreat.
 The rabble scattered as the ladies came,
 Who with extended hand the warrior greet.
 He, with a kindling visage, red with shame,
 Thanked the two damsel for their gentle feat:
 And was content upon their will to wait,
 With them returning to that golden gate.

Above, a cornice round the gateway goes,
 Somedea! projecting from the colonnade.
 In which is not a single part but glows,
 With rarest gems of India overlaid.
 Propp'd at four points, the portal did repose
 On columns of one solid diamond made.
 Whether what met the eye was false or true,
 Was never sight more fair or glad to view.

Upon the sill and through the columns there,
 Ran young and wanton girls, in frolic sport;
 Who haply yet would have appeared more fair,
 Had they observed a woman's fitting port.
 All are arrayed in green, and garlands wear
 Of the fresh leaf. Him these in courteous sort,
 With many proffers and fair mien entice,
 And welcome to this opening Paradise:

For so with reason I this place may call,
Where, it is my belief, that Love had birth;
Where life is spent in festive game and ball,
And still the passing moments fleet in mirth.
Here hoary-headed Thought ne'er comes at all,
Nor finds a place in any bosom. Dearth,
Nor yet Discomfort, never enter here,
Where Plenty fills her horn throughout the year.

Here, where with jovial and unclouded brow,
Glad April seems to wear a constant smile,
Troop boys and damsels. One, where fountains flow,
On the green margin sings in dulcet style;
Others, the hill or tufted tree below,
In dance, or no mean sport the hours beguile.
While this, who shuns the revelers' noisy cheer,
Tells his love sorrows in his comrade's ear.

Above the laurel and the pine-tree's height,
Through the tall beech and shaggy fir-tree's spray,
Sport little loves, with desultory flight:
These, at their conquests made, rejoiced and gay:
These, with the well-directed shaft, take sight
At hearts, and those spread nets to catch their prey:
One wets his arrows in the brook that winds,
And one on whirling stone the weapon grinds.

That kindly pair who, by the wicked band
Offended late, had saved the youthful knight—
The wicked crew, that did the Childe withstand,
When he the road had taken on his right—
Exclaimed, "Fair sir, your works already scanned
By us, who are instructed of your might
Embolden us, in our behalf, to pray
You will the prowess of your arm assay.

"We soon shall reach a bottom which divides
 The plain into two parts: A cruel dame
 A bridge maintains, which there a stream bestrides,
 Eriphila the savage beldam's name;
 Who cheats, and robs, and scathes whoever rides
 To the other shore, a giantess in frame;
 Who has long poisonous teeth her prey to tear,
 And scratches with her talons like a bear.

"Besides that she infests the public way,
 Which else were free; she often, ranging through
 All this fair garden, puts in disarray
 This thing or that. Of the assassin crew
 That people who, without the portal gay,
 Lately with brutal rage assaulted you,
 Many her sons, the whole her followers call,
 As greedy and inhospitable all."

"For you not only her I would assail,
 But do a hundred battles, well content;
 Then of my person, where it may avail,
 Dispose (Rogero said) to your intent.
 Silver and land to conquer, plate or mail
 I wear not, I, in warlike cuirass pent;
 But to afford my aid to others due;
 And, most of all, to beauteous dames like you."

The traveler, he whom sea or mountain sunder
 From his own country, sees things strange and new,
 That the misjudging vulgar, which lies under
 The mist of ignorance, esteems untrue,
 Rejecting whatsoever is a wonder,
 Unless 'tis palpable and plain to view:
 Hence inexperience, as I know full well,
 Will yield small credence to the tale I tell.

But be this great or small, I know not why
The rabble's silly judgment I should fear,
Convinced *you* will not think the tale a lie,
In whom the light of reason shines so clear.
And hence to you it is I only try
The fruit of my fatigues to render dear.
I ended where Eriphila in guard
Of bridge and stream was seen, the passage barred.

Of finest metal was her armor bright,
With gems of many colors overspread,
The tawny jacinth, yellow chrysolite,
The emerald green of hue, and ruby red.
Mounted, but not on palfrey, for the fight;
In place of that, she on a wolf had sped,
Sped on a wolf toward the pass, and rode
On sell that rich beyond all custom showed.

No larger wolf, I ween, Apulia roams;
More huge than bull; unguided by her hand;
Although upon no bit the monster foams,
Docile, I know not why, to her command.
The accursed Plague, arrayed in surcoat, comes
Above her arms, in color like the sand;
That, saving in its dye, was of the sort
Which bishops and which prelates wear at court.

The giantess's crest and shield appear,
For ensign, decked with swoln and poisonous toad.
Her the two damsels to the cavalier
Before the bridge, prepared for battle, showed,
Threatening, as wont to some, with leveled spear,
To do the warrior scorn and bar the road.
Bidding him turn, she to Rogero cries;
A lance he takes, and threats her and defies.

As quick and daring, the gigantic Pest
 Spurred her wolf, seated well for that dread game:
 In mid career she laid her lance in rest,
 And made earth quake beneath her as she came;
 Yet at the encounter fierce the campaign pressed,
 For underneath the sacque, with steadfast aim,
 So hard Rogero smote her, that he bore
 The beldam backward six good yards and more,

And came already with his lifted blade,
 Drawn for that end, to take her haughty head;
 To him an easy task; for she was laid
 Among the grass and flowers, like one that's dead.
 But, "'Tis enough that she is vanquished," said
 The pair: "no further press thy vengeance dread.
 Sheathe, courteous cavalier, thy sword anew;
 Pass we the river, and our way pursue."

Along the path, which through a forest lay
 Roughish and someddeal ill to beat, they went.
 Besides that strait and stony was the way,
 This, nigh directly, scaled a hill's ascent.
 But, when arrived upon the summit, they
 Issued upon a mead of vast extent;
 And a more pleasant palace on that green
 Beheld, and brighter than was ever seen.

To meet the childe, Alcina, fair of hue,
 Advanced some way beyond the outer gate;
 And, girded by a gay and courtly crew,
 Rogero there received in lordly state:
 While all the rest to him such honor do,
 And on the knight with such deep reverence wait,
 They could not have displayed more zeal and love,
 Had Jove descended from the choirs above.

Not so much does the palace, fair to see,
In riches other princely domes excel,
As that the gentlest, fairest company
Which the whole world contains, within it dwell:
Of either sex, with small variety
Between, in youth and beauty matched as well:
The fay alone exceeds the rest as far
As the bright sun outshines each lesser star.

Her shape is of such perfect symmetry,
As best to feign the industrious painter knows,
With long and knotted tresses; to the eye
Not yellow gold with brighter luster glows.
Upon her tender cheek the mingled dye
Is scattered of the lily and the rose.
Like ivory smooth, the forehead gay and round
Fills up the space and forms a fitting bound.

Two black and slender arches rise above
Two clear black eyes, say suns of radiant light,
Which ever softly beam and slowly move;
Round these appears to sport in frolic flight,
Hence scattering all his shafts, the little Love,
And seems to plunder hearts in open sight.
Thence, through mid visage, does the nose descend,
Where Envy finds not blemish to amend.

As if between two vales, which softly curl,
The mouth with vermeil tint is seen to glow:
Within are strung two rows of orient pearl,
Which her delicious lips shut up or show.
Of force to melt the heart of any churl,
However rude, hence courteous accents flow;
And here that gentle smile receives its birth,
Which opes at will a paradise on earth.

Like milk the bosom, and the neck of snow;
 Round is the neck, and full and large the breast;
 Where, fresh and firm, two ivory apples grow,
 Which rise and fall, as, to the margin pressed
 By pleasant breeze, the billows come and go.
 Not prying Argus could discern the rest.
 Yet might the observing eye of things concealed
 Conjecture safely, from the charms revealed.

To all her arms a just proportion bear,
 And a white hand is oftentimes descried,
 Which narrow is and someddeal long; and where
 No knot appears, nor vein is signified.
 For finish of that stately shape and rare,
 A foot, neat, short and round, beneath is spied.
 Angelic visions, creatures of the sky,
 Concealed beneath no covering veil can lie.

A springe is planted in Rogero's way,
 On all sides did she speak, smile, sing, or move
 No wonder then the stripling was her prey,
 Who in the fairy saw such show of love.
 With him the guilt and falsehood little weigh,
 Of which the offended myrtle told above.
 Nor will he think that perfidy and guile
 Can be united with so sweet a smile.

The beauteous lady whom he loved so well
 Is newly banished from his altered breast;
 For (such the magic of Alcina's spell)
 She every ancient passion dispossessed:
 And in his bosom, there alone to dwell,
 The image of her love and self impressed.
 So witched, Rogero sure some grace deserves,
 If from his faith his frail affection swerves.

At board lyre, lute and harp of tuneful string,
And other sounds, in mixed diversity,
Made round about the joyous palace ring
With glorious concert and sweet harmony.
Nor lacked there well-accorded voice to sing
Of love, its passion and its ecstasy;
Nor who, with rare inventions, choicely versed,
Delightful fiction to the guests rehearsed.

They form a ring, the board and festive cheer
Removed, and sitting, play a merry game.
Each asks, still whispering in a neighbors's ear,
What secret pleases best; to knight and dame
A fair occasion, without let or fear,
Their love, unheard of any, to proclaim.
And in conclusion the two lovers plight
Their word, to meet together on that night.

Soon, and much sooner than their wont, was ended
The game at which the palace inmates play;
When pages on the troop with torches tended,
And with their radiance chased the night away.
To seek his bed the paladin ascended,
Girt with that goodly squadron, in a gay
And airy bower, appointed for his rest,
Mid all the others chosen as the best.

And when of comfits and of cordial wine
A fitting proffer has been made anew,
The guests their bodies reverently incline,
And to their bowers depart the courtly crew.
He upon perfumed sheets, whose texture fine
Seemed of Arachne's loom, his body threw:
Harkening this while with still attentive ears,
If he the coming of the lady hears.

At every movement heard on distant floor,
 Hoping 'twas she, Rogero raised his head:
 He thinks he hears; but it is heard no more.
 Then sighs at his mistake: oft-times from bed
 He issued, and undid his chamber door,
 And peeped abroad, but still no better sped;
 And cursed a thousand times the hour that she
 So long retarded his felicity.

"Yes, now she comes," the stripling often said,
 And reckoned up the paces, as he lay,
 Which from her bower were haply to be made
 To that where he was waiting for the fay.
 These thoughts, and other thoughts as vain, he weighed
 Before she came, and, restless at her stay,
 Often believed some hinderance, yet unscanned,
 Might interpose between the fruit and hand.

At length, when dropping sweets the costly fay
 Had put some end to her perfumery,
 The time now come she need no more delay,
 Since all was hushed within the palace, she
 Stole from her bower alone, through secret way,
 And passed toward the chamber silently,
 Where on his couch the youthful cavalier
 Lay, with a heart long torn by Hope and Fear.

When the successor of Astolpho spies
 Those smiling stars above him, at the sight
 A flame, like that of kindled sulphur, flies
 Through his full veins, as ravished by delight
 Out of himself; and now up to the eyes
 Plunged in a sea of bliss, he swims outright.
 He leaps from bed and folds her to his breast,
 Nor waits until the lady be undressed;

Though but in a light sendal clad, that she
Wore in the place of farthingale or gown;
Which o'er a shift of finest quality,
And white, about her limbs the fay had thrown,
The mantle yielded at his touch, as he
Embraced her, and that veil remained alone,
Which upon every side the damsel shows,
More than clear glass the lily or the rose.

The plant no closer does the ivy clip,
With whose green boughs its stem is interlaced,
Than those fond lovers, each from either's lip
The balmy breath collecting, lie embraced.
Rich perfume this, whose like no seed or slip
Bears in sweet Indian or Sabæan waste;
While so to speak their joys is either fixed,
That oftentimes those meeting lips are mixed.

These things were carried closely by the dame
And youth, or if surmised, were never bruited;
For silence seldom was a cause for blame,
But oftener as a virtue well reputed.
By those shrewd courtiers, conscious of his claim,
Rogero is with proffers fair saluted:
Worshipped of all those inmates, who fulfil
In this the enamored fay Alcina's will.

No pleasure is omitted there; since they
Alike are prisoners in Love's magic hall.
They changed their raiment twice or thrice a day,
Now for this use, and now at other call.
'Tis often feast, and always holiday;
'Tis wrestling, tourney, pageant, bath, and ball;
Now underneath a hill by fountain cast,
They read the amorous lays of ages past;

Now by glad hill, or through the shady dale,
 They hunt the fearful hare, and now they flush
 With busy dog, sagacious of the trail,
 Wild pheasant from the stubble-field or bush.
 Now where green junipers perfume the gale,
 Suspend the snare, or lime the fluttering thrush;
 And casting now for fish, with net or hook,
 Disturb their secret haunts in pleasant brook.

[To be read after the first stanza on page 78.]

Her face was such as sometimes in the spring
 We see a doubtful sky, when on the plain
 A shower descends, and the sun, opening
 His cloudy veil, looks out amid the rain.
 And as the nightingale then loves to sing
 From branch of verdant stem her dulcet strain,
 So in her beauteous tears his pinions bright
 Love bathes, rejoicing in the crystal light.

The stripling heats his golden arrow's head
 At her bright eyes, then slacks the weapon's glow
 In streams, which fall between white flowers and red
 And, the shaft tempered, strongly draws his bow,
 And roves at him, o'er whom no shield is spread,
 Nor iron rind, nor double mail below;
 Who, gazing on her tresses, eyes, and brow,
 Feels that his heart is pierced, he knows not how.

Olympia's beauties are of those most rare,
 Nor is the forehead's beauteous curve alone
 Excellent, and her eyes and cheeks and hair,
 Mouth, nose, and throat, and shoulders; but, so down
 Descending from the lady's bosom fair,
 Parts which are wont to be concealed by gown
 Are such as haply should be placed before
 Whate'er this ample world contains in store.

In whiteness they surpass'd unsullied snow,
Smooth ivory to the touch; above were seen
Two rounding paps, like new-press'd milk in show,
Fresh-taken from its crate of rushes green;
The space betwixt was like the valley low,
Which oftentimes we see small hills between,
Sweet in its season; and now such as when
Winter with snows has newly filled the glen.

The swelling hips and haunches' symmetry,
The waist more clear than mirror's polished grain,
And members seem of Phidias' turnery,
Or work of better hand and nicer pain.
As well to you of other parts should I
Relate, which she to hide desired in vain.
To sum the beauteous whole, from head to feet,
In her all loveliness is found complete.

And had she in the Idæan glen unveiled
In ancient days before the Phrygian swain,
By how much heavenly Venus had prevailed
I know not, though her rivals strove in vain.
Nor haply had the youth for Sparta sailed,
To violate the hospitable reign;
But said: "With Menelaus let Helen rest!
No other prize I seek, of his possess;"

Or in Crotona dwelt, where the divine
Zeuxis in days of old his work projected,
To be the ornament of Juno's shrine,
And hence so many naked dames collected;
And in one form perfection to combine,
Some separate charm from this or that selected,
He from no other model need have wrought,
Since joined in her were all the charms he sought.

I do not think Bireno ever viewed
 Naked that beauteous form; for sure it were
 He never could have been so stern of mood,
 As to have left her on that desert lair.
 That Ireland's king was fired I well conclude,
 Nor hid the flame that he within him bare.
 He strives to comfort her, and hope instil,
 That future good shall end her present ill.

[To be read after the fourth stanza on page 94.]

"Here the fell tyrant Love, aye prompt to range,
 And faithless to his every promise still,
 Who watches ever how he may derange
 And mar our every reasonable will,
 Converts, with woful and disastrous change,
 My comfort to despair, my good to ill:
 For he in whom Zerbino put his trust,
 Cooled in his loyal faith, and burned with lust.

"Whether he this desire had nursed at sea,
 And had not dared exhibit it before;
 Or that it sprung from opportunity,
 Suggested by that solitary shore;
 Without more pause, in that lone desert, he
 Would sate his greedy passion; but forbore
 Till he of one could rid him, of the twain,
 Who in the boat with us had scaped the main.

"A man of Scotland he, Almonio hight,
 Who to Zerbino seemed great faith to bear;
 And as a perfect warrior by the knight,
 Praised, when to Odoric given, his trust to share
 To him (the Spaniard said) it were a slight
 If I unto Rochelle afoot should fare;
 And prayed that he before would thither speed,
 And forward thence some hackney for my need.

"Almonio, who in this suspects no ill,
Forthwith, before our party, wends his way
To the town, hidden by the wooded hill,
And which not more than six miles distant lay.
To the other finally his wicked will
Sir Odoric took courage to display;
As well because he could not rid him thence,
As that in him he had great confidence.

"He that remained with us, of whom I said
Before, Corebo was of Bilbao hight,
Who with him under the same roof was bred
From infancy, and the ungrateful wight
Deemed that the thought he harbored in his head
He could impart in safety to the knight,
Who would prefer, neglectful of his trust,
The pleasure of his friend to what was just.

"Not without high disdain Corebo heard
(Who kind and courteous was) the Biscayneer,
And termed him traitor; and by deed and word
Withstood the purpose of his foul compeer.
This mighty wrath in either warrior stirred;
In sign whereof their naked brands they rear.
At sight of their drawn swords, in panic, I
Turn shortly through the gloomy wood to fly.

"Sir Odoric in war well taught and bred,
Gained in few blows such vantage in the fray,
He left Corebo on the field for dead,
And, following in my steps, pursued my way.
Love lent to him, unless I am misled,
Pinions, that he might overtake his prey;
And many a prayer and glozing flattery taught,
Wherewith I to compliance might be wrought.

"But all in vain, for I was fixed and bent,
 Rather than sate his ill desire, to die.
 When menace had by him been vainly spent,
 And every prayer and every flattery,
 He would by open force his will content;
 Nor boots it aught that I entreaties try;
 Of his lord's faith in him the wretch remind,
 And how myself I to his hands resigned.

"When I perceived that ruthless was my prayer,
 And that I could not hope for other aid—
 For he assailed me like a famished bear—
 With hands and feet I fierce resistance made,
 As he more brutal waxed, and plucked his hair.
 And with my teeth and nails his visage flayed:
 This while I vent such lamentable cries,
 The clamor echoes to the starry skies.

"Were they by chance conducted, or my shriek,
 Which might have well been heard a league around,
 Or, was it they were wont the shore to seek,
 When any vessel split or ran aground,
 I saw a crowd appear upon the peak,
 Which, to the sea descending, toward us wound.
 Them the Biscayan saw, and at the sight
 Abandoned his design, and turned to flight.

"This rabble, sir, against that treacherous man
 Comes to my aid; but in such guise, that I
 The homely saw, of falling from the pan
 Into the fire beneath, but verify.
 'Tis true so lost I was not, nor that clan
 Accursed with minds of such iniquity,
 That they to violate my person sought;
 Though nothing good or virtuous on them wrought;

"But that they knew, for me preserved a maid,
As yet I am, they higher price might crave.
Eight months are past, the ninth arrived, since, stayed
By them, alive I languish in this grave.
All hope is lost of my Zerbino's aid;
For from their speech I gather, as a slave,
I am bartered to a merchant for his gold;
By whom I to the sultan shall be sold."

[To be read after the second stanza on page 104.]

Next much more affable, with courteous lore
Seasoning her answers to his suit, replies;
Nor looking at the king, sometimes forbore
To fix upon his face her pitying eyes.
The paynim thence, whom Love had smote before,
Not hopeful now, but certain, of his prize,
Deemed that the lovely damsel would not still,
As late, be found rebellious to his will.

Riding in her glad company a-field,
Which so rejoiced his soul, so satisfied;
And being near the time when to their bield,
Warned by the chilly night, all creatures hied,
Seeing the sun now low and half concealed,
The warrior 'gan in greater hurry ride;
Until he heard reed-pipe and whistle sound,
And next saw farm and cabin smoking round.

Pastoral lodgings were the dwellings near,
Less formed for show than for conveniency;
And the young damsel and the cavalier
The herdsman welcomed with such courtesy
That both were pleased by his kindly cheer.
For not alone dwells hospitality
In court and city; but ofttimes we find
In loft and cottage men of gentle kind.

What afterward was done at close of day
 Between the damsel and the Tartar lord,
 I will not take upon myself to say;
 So leave to each, at pleasure, to award.
 But as they rose the following morn more gay,
 It would appear they were of fair accord;
 And on the swain who them such honor showed,
 Her thanks at parting Doralice bestowed.

[To be read after page 168.]

She, if of vain desire she will not die,
 Must help herself, nor yet delay the aid.
 And she in truth, her will to satisfy,
 Deemed 'twas no time to wait till she was prayed.
 And next of shame renouncing every tie,
 With tongue as bold as eyes, petition made,
 And begged him, haply an unwitting foe,
 To sheathe the suffering of that cruel blow.

O Count Orlando, King of Circassy,
 Say what your valor has availed to you!
 Say what your honor boots, what goodly fee
 Remunerates ye both, for service true!
 Sirs, show me but a single courtesy,
 With which she ever graced ye—old or new—
 As some poor recompense, desert, or guerdon,
 For having borne so long so sore a burden!

Oh, couldst thou yet again to life return,
 How hard would this appear, O Agricane!
 In that she whilom thee was wont to spurn,
 With sharp repulse and insolent disdain.
 O Ferraü, O ye thousand more, forlorn,
 Unsung, who wrought a thousand feats in vain
 For this ungrateful fair, what pain 'twould be
 Could you within his arms the damsel see!

To pluck, as yet untouched, the virgin rose,
Angelica permits the young Medore.
Was none so blest as in that garden's close
Yet to have set his venturous foot before.
They holy ceremonies interpose,
Someddeal to veil—to gild—the matter o'er.
Young Love was bridesman there the tie to bless,
And for brideswoman stood the shepherdess.

In the low shed, with all solemnities,
The couple made their wedding as they might;
And there above a month, in tranquil guise,
The happy lovers rested in delight.
Save for the youth the lady has no eyes,
Nor with his looks can satisfy her sight.
Nor yet of hanging on his neck can tire,
Or feel she can content her fond desire.

The beauteous boy is with her, night and day
Does she untent herself, or keep the shed.
Morning or eve they to some meadow stray,
Now to this bank, and to that other led;
Haply, in cavern harbored, at mid-day,
Grateful as that to which Æneas fled
With Dido, when the tempest raged above,
The faithful witness to their secret love.

Amid such pleasures, where, with tree o'ergrown,
Ran stream, or bubbling fountain's wave did spin,
On bark or rock, if yielding were the stone,
The knife was straight at work or ready pin.
And there, without, in thousand places lone,
And in as many places graved, within,
Medoro and *Angelica* were traced,
In divers cyphers quaintly interlaced.

[To be read after page 169.]

Sore dangerous 'twas no doubt; lest hostile band
Should sally from the puissant town in sight,
With armed barks, and upon theirs lay hand,
In evil case for sea, and worse for fight.
What time the patron knows not what command
To give, of him inquires the English knight,
What kept his mind suspended in that sort,
And why at first he had not made the port.

To him relates the patron, how a crew
Of murderous women tenanted that shore,
Which, by their ancient law, enslaved or slew
All those whom Fortune to this kingdom bore;
And that *he* only could such lot eschew
That in the lists ten champions overbore,
And having this achieved, the following night
In bed should with ten damsels take delight.

And if he brings to end the former feat,
But afterward the next unfinished leaves,
They kill him, and as slaves his following treat,
Condemned to delve their land or keep their beeves.
If for the first and second labor meet,
He liberty for all his band achieves,
Not for himself; who there must stay and wed
Ten wives by him selected for his bed.

So strange a custom of the neighboring strand
Without a laugh Astolpho cannot hear;
Sansonet and Marphisa, near at hand,
Next Aquilant, and he, his brother dear,
Arrive. To them the patron who from land
Aye keeps aloof, explains the cause of fear,
And cries: "I liefer in the sea would choke,
Than here of servitude endure the yoke."

The sailors by the patron's rede abide,
And all the passengers affrighted sore;
Save that Marphisa took the other side
With her who deemed that safer was the shore
Than sea, which raging round them, far and wide,
Than a hundred thousand swords dismayed them more.
Them little this or other place alarms,
So that they have but power to wield their arms.

The warriors are impatient all to land;
But boldest is of these the English peer;
Knowing how soon his horn will clear the strand,
When the scared foe its pealing sound shall hear
To put into the neighboring port this band
Desires, and are at strife with those who fear.
And they who are the strongest, in such sort
Compel the patron that he makes the port.

Already when their bark was first espied
At sea, within the cruel city's view,
They had observed a galley, well supplied
With practised mariners and numerous crew
(While them uncertain counsels did divide)
Make for their wretched ship, the billows through.
Her lofty prow to their short stern and low
These lash, and into port the vessel tow.

Like a half-moon, projected from the beach,
More than four miles about, the city's port;
Six hundred paces deep; and crowning each
Horn of the circling haven, was a fort;
On every side, secure from storm or breach
(Save only from the south), a safe resort.
In guise of theater the town extended
About it, and a hill behind ascended.

No sooner there the harbored ship was seen
 (The news had spread already through the land)
 Than thitherward, with martial garb and mien,
 Six thousand women trooped with bow in hand;
 And, to remove all hope of flight, between
 One castle and the other, drew a band;
 And with strong chains and barks the port enclosed,
 Which ever, for that use, they kept disposed.

A dame, as the Cumean sybil gray,
 Or Hector's ancient mother of renown,
 Made call the patron out, and bade him say
 If they their lives were willing to lay down;
 Or were content beneath the yoke to stay,
 According to the custom of the town.
 One of two evils they must choose—be slain,
 Or captives, one and all, must there remain.

"'Tis true, if one so bold and of such might
 Be found amid your crew," the matron said,
 "That he ten men of ours engage in fight,
 And can in cruel battle lay them dead,
 And, after, with ten women, in one night,
 Suffice to play the husband's part in bed,
 He shall remain our sovereign, and shall sway
 The land, and you may homeward wend your way.

"And at *your* choice to stay shall also be,
 Whether a part or all, but with this pact,
 That he who here would stay and would be free,
 Can with ten dames the husband's part enact.
 But if your chosen warrior fall or flee,
 By his ten enemies at once attacked,
 Or for the second function have not breath,
 To slavery you we doom, and him to death."

At what she deemed the cavaliers would start,
The beldam found them bold; for to compete
With those they should engage, and play their part
The champions hoped alike in either feat.
Nor failed renowned Marphisa's valiant heart,
Albeit for the second dance unmeet;
Secure, where nature had her aid denied,
The want should with the falchion be supplied.

The patron is commanded their reply
Resolved in common council to unfold;
The dames at pleasure may their prowess try,
And shall in lists and bed allow them bold.
The lashings from the vessels they untie,
The skipper heaves the warp, and bids lay hold,
And lowers the bridge; o'er which, in warlike weed,
The expectant cavaliers their coursers lead.

These through the middle of the city go,
And see the damsels, as they forward fare,
Ride through the streets, succinct, in haughty show,
And arm, in guise of warriors, in the square.
Nor to gird sword, nor fasten spur below,
Is man allowed, nor any arm to wear;
Excepting, as I said, the ten; to follow
The ancient usage which those women hallow.

All others of the manly sex they seat,
To ply the distaff, broider. card and sow,
In female gown descending to the feet,
Which renders them effeminate and slow;
Some chained, another labor to complete,
Are tasked, to keep their cattle, or to plow.
Few are the males; and scarce the warriors ken,
Amid a thousand dames, a hundred men.

The knights determining by lot to try
 Who in their common cause, on listed ground,
 Should slay the ten, with whom they were to vie,
 And in the other field ten others wound,
 Designed to pass the bold Marphisa by,
 Believing she unfitting would be found;
 And would be, in the second joust at eve,
 Ill-qualified the victory to achieve.

But with the others she, the martial maid,
 Will run her risk; and 'tis her destiny.
 "I will lay down this life," the damsel said,
 "Rather than you lay down your liberty.
 But *this*"—with that she pointed to the blade
 Which she had girt—"is your security,
 I will all tangles in such manner loose,
 As Alexander did the Gordian noose.

"I will not henceforth stranger shall complain,
 So long as the world lasts, of this repair."
 So said the maid, nor could the friendly train
 Take from her what had fallen to her share.
 Then—either everything to lose, or gain
 Their liberty—to her they leave the care.
 With stubborn plate and mail all over steeled,
 Ready for cruel fight, she takes the field.

High up the spacious city is a place,
 With steps, which serve as seats in rising rows;
 Which for naught else is used, except the chase,
 Tourney, or wrestling match, or such-like shows.
 Four gates of solid bronze secure the space.
 Thither of armed dames the rabble flows
 In troubled tide; and to Marphisa bold
 That she may enter afterward is told.

On piebald horse Marphisa entered—spread
Were circles dappling all about his hair—
Of a bold countenance and little head,
And beauteous points, and haughty gait and air.
Out of a thousand coursers that he fed,
Him, as the best, and biggest, and most rare,
King Norandino chose, and decked with brave
And costly trappings, to Marphisa gave.

Through the south gate, from the mid-day, the plain
Marphisa entered, nor expected long,
Before she heard approaching trumpet-strain
Peal through the lists in shrilling notes and strong,
And, looking next toward the northern wain,
Saw her ten opposites appear. Among
These, as their leader, pricked a cavalier,
Excelling all the rest in goodly cheer.

On a large courser came the leading foe,
Which was, excepting the near foot behind
And forehead, darker than was ever crow.
His foot and forehead with some white were signed.
The horseman did his horse's colors show
In his own dress; and hence might be divined,
He, as the mournful hue o'erpowered the clear,
Was less inclined to smile, than mournful tear.

At once their spears in rest nine warriors laid,
When the trump sounded, in the hostile train.
But he in black no sign of jousting made,
As if he held such vantage in disdain.
Better he deemed the law were disobeyed,
Than that his courtesy should suffer stain.
The knight retires apart, and sits to view
What against nine one single lance can do.

Of smooth and balanced pace, the damsel's horse
 To the encounter her with swiftness bore;
 Who poised a lance so massive in the course,
 It would have been an overweight for four.
 She, disembarking, as of greatest force,
 The boom had chosen out of many more.
 At her fierce semblance when in motion, quail
 A thousand hearts, a thousand looks grow pale

The bosom of the first she opens so,
 As might surprise, if naked were the breast:
 She pierced the cuirass and the mail below;
 But first a buckler, solid and well prest.
 A yard behind the shoulders of the foe
 Was seen the steel, so well was it addrest.
 Speared on her lance she left him on the plain,
 And at the others drove with flowing rein;

And as she shocked the second of the crew,
 And dealt the third so terrible a blow,
 From sell and life, with broken spine, the two
 She drove at once. So fell the overthrow,
 And with such weight she charged the warriors through!
 So serried was the battle of the foe!
 I have seen bombarded open in such mode
 The squadron as that band Marphisa strowed.

Many good spears were broken on the dame,
 Who was as little moved as solid wall,
 When revelers play the chase's merry game,
 Is ever moved by stroke of heavy ball.
 So hard the temper of her corselet's mail,
 The strokes aye harmless on the breastplate fall.
 Whose steel was heated in the fires of hell.
 And in Avernus' water slaked by spell.

At the end of the career, she checked her steed,
 Wheeled him about, and for a little stayed;
And then against the others drove at speed,
 Broke them, and to the handle dyed her blade.
Here shorn of arms, and there of head, they bleed
 And other in such manner cleft the maid,
That breast, and head, and arms together fell,
Belly and legs remaining in the sell.

With such just measure him she cleaves, I say,
 Where the two haunches and the ribs confine,
And leaves him a half figure, in such way
 As what we before images divine,
Of silver, oftener made of wax, survey;
 Which supplicants from far and near enshrine,
In thanks for mercy shown, and to bestow
A pious quittance for accepted' vow.

Marphisa next made after one that flew,
 And overtook the wretch, and cleft (before
He the mid-square had won) his collar through,
 So clean, no surgeon ever pierced it more.
One after other, all in fine she slew,
 Or wounded every one she smote so sore,
She was secure, that never more would foe
Arise anew from earth, to work her woe.

The cavalier this while had stood aside,
 Who had the ten conducted to the place,
Since, with so many against one to ride,
 Had seemed to him advantage foul and base;
Who, now he by a single hand espied
 So speedily his whole array displaced,
Pricked forth against the martial maid, to show
'Twas courtesy, not fear had made him slow.

He signing with his right hand, made appear
 That he would speak ere their career was run,
 Nor thinking that beneath such manly cheer
 A gentle virgin was concealed, begun:
 "I wot thou needs must be, sir cavalier,
 Sore wearied with such mighty slaughter done;
 And if I were disposed to weary thee
 More than thou art, it were discourtesy.

"To thee, to rest until to-morrow's light,
 Then to renew the battle, I concede.
 No honor 'twere to-day to prove my might
 On thee, whom weak and overwrought I read."
 "Arms are not new to me, nor listed fight;
 Nor does fatigue so short a toil succeed,"
 Answered Marphisa. "And I, at my post,
 Hope to prove this upon thee, to thy cost.

"I thank thee for thy offer of delay,
 But need not what thy courtesy agrees;
 And yet remains so large a space of day
 'Twere very shame to spend it all in ease."
 "Oh, were I (he replied) so sure to appay
 My heart with everything which best would please,
 As thine I shall appay in this!—but see,
 That ere thou thinkest, daylight fail not thee."

So said he; and obedient to his hest
 Two spears, say rather heavy booms, they bear.
 He to Marphisa bids consign the best,
 And the other takes himself. The martial pair
 Already, with their lances in the rest,
 Wait but till other blast the joust declare.
 Lo, earth and air and sea the noise rebound,
 As they prick forth, at the first trumpet's sound!

No mouth was opened and no eyelid fell,
Nor breath was drawn, amid the observant crew;
So sore intent was every one to spell

Which should be conqueror of the warlike two.
Marphisa the black champion from his sell,

So to o'erthrow he shall not rise anew,
Levels her lance; and the black champion, bent
To slay Marphisa, spurs with like intent.

Both lances, made of willow thin and dry,
Rather than stout and stubborn oak, appeared;
So splintered even to the rest, they fly;
While with such force the encountering steeds ca-
reered,

It seemed, as with a scythe-blade equally
The hams of either courser had been sheared.
Alike both fall; but voiding quick the seat,
The nimble riders start upon their feet.

Marphisa in her life, with certain wound,
A thousand cavaliers on earth had laid;
And never had herself been borne to ground;
Yet quitted now the saddle, as was said.

Not only at the accident astound,
But nigh beside herself, remained the maid.
Strange to the sable cavalier withal,
Unwont to be unhorsed, appeared his fall.

They hardly touch the ground before they gain
Their feet, and now the fierce assault renew,
With cut and thrust; which now with shield the twain
Or blade ward off, and now by leaps eschew.
Whether the foes strike home, or smite in vain,
Blows ring, and echo parted æther through.
More force those shields, those helms, those breastplates
show
Than anvils underneath the sounding blow.

The women who have sate long time, to view
 The champions with such horrid strokes offend,
 Nor sign of trouble in the warriors true
 Behold, nor yet of weariness, commend
 Them with just praises, as the worthiest two
 That are, where'er the sea's wide arms extend.
 They deem these of mere toil and labor long
 Must die, save they be strongest of the strong.

Communing with herself, Marphisa said,
 "That he moved not before was well for me!
 Who risked to have been numbered with the dead
 If he at first had joined his company.
 Since, as it is, I hardly can make head
 Against his deadly blows." This colloquy
 She with herself maintained, and, while she spoke,
 Ceased not to ply her sword with circling stroke.

" 'Twas well for me," the other cried again,
 "That to repose I did not leave the knight.
 I now from him defend myself with pain,
 Who is o'erwearied with the former fight:
 What had he been, renewed in might and main,
 If he had rested till to-morrow's light?
 Right fortunate was I, as man could be,
 That he refused my proffered courtesy!"

Till eve they strove, nor did it yet appear
 Which had the vantage of the doubtful fray:
 Nor, without light, could either foe see clear
 How to avoid the furious blows. When day
 Was done, again the courteous cavalier
 To his illustrious opposite 'gan say:
 "What shall we do, since ill-timed shades descend,
 While we with equal fortune thus contend?"

"Meseems, at least, that till to-morrow's morn
'Twere better thou prolonged thy life; no right
Have I thy doom, sir warrior, to adjourn
Beyond the limits of one little night.
Nor will I that by me the blame be borne
That thou no longer shalt enjoy the light.
With reason to the sex's charge by whom
This place is governed lay thy cruel doom.

"If I lament thee and thy company,
He knows, by whom all hidden things are spied
Thou and thy comrades may repose with me,
For whom there is no safe abode beside;
Since leagued against you in conspiracy
Are all whose husbands by thy hand have died.
For every valiant warrior of the men
Slain in the tourney consort was of ten.

"The scathe they have to-day received from thee,
Would ninety women wreak with vengeful spite,
And, save thou take my hospitality,
Expect by them to be assailed this night."
"I take thy proffer in security,"
Replied Marphisa, "that the faith so plight,
And goodness of thy heart, will prove no less,
Than are thy corporal strength and hardiness.

"But if, as having to kill me, thou grieve,
Thou well mayst grieve, for reasons opposite;
Nor hast thou cause to laugh, as I conceive,
Nor hitherto hast found me worst in fight.
Whether thou wouldst defer the fray, or leave,
Or prosecute by this or other light,
Behold me prompt thy wishes to fulfil;
Where and whenever it shall be thy will!"

So by consent the combatants divided,
 Till the dawn broke from Ganges' stream anew;
 And so remained the question undecided,
 Which was the better champion of the two.
 To both the brothers and the rest who sided
 Upon that part, the liberal lord did sue
 With courteous prayer, that till the coming day
 They would be pleased beneath his roof to stay.

They unsuspecting with the prayer complied,
 And by the cheerful blaze of torches white
 A royal dome ascended, with their guide,
 Divided into many bowers and bright.
 The combatants remain as stupefied,
 On lifting up their vizors, at the sight
 One of the other; for, by what appears,
 The warrior hardly numbers eighteen years.

Much marvels with herself the gentle dame,
 That one so young so well should do and dare.
 Much marvels he, his wonderment the same,
 When he her sex agnizes by her hair.
 Questioning one another of their name,
 As speedily reply the youthful pair.
 But how was hight the youthful cavalier,
 Await till the ensuing strain to hear.

To her returning yet again; the dame
 To him who shewed to her such courteous lore,
 Refused not to disclose her martial name,
 Since he agreed to tell the style he bore.
 She quickly satisfied the warrior's claim;
 To learn his title she desired so sore.
 "I am Marphisa," the virago cried:
 All else was known, as bruited far and wide.

The other, since 'twas his to speak, begun

With longer preamble: "Amid your train,
Sirs, it is my belief that there is none

But has heard mention of my race and strain.
Not Pontus, Æthiopia, Ind alone,

With all their neighboring realms, but France and
Spain

Wot well of Clermont, from whose loins the knight
Issued who killed Almontes bold in fight.

"And Chiarêillo and Mambrino slew,

And sacked the realm whose royal crown they wore.
Come of this blood, where Danube's waters, through

Eight horns or ten to meet the Euxine pour,
Me to the far-renowned Duke Aymon, who

Thither a stranger roved, my mother bore.
And 'tis a twelvemonth now since her, in quest
Of my French kin, I left with grief opprest;

"But reached not France, for southern tempest's spite

Impelled me hither; lodged in royal bower
Ten months or more; for, miserable wight!

I reckon every day and every hour.
Guido the Savage I by name am hight,

Ill known and scarcely proved in warlike stower.
Here Argilon of Melibœa I
Slew with ten warriors in his company.

"Conqueror as well in other field confessed,

Ten ladies are the partners of my bed,
Selected at my choice, who are the best

And fairest damsels in this kingdom bred:
These I command, as well as all the rest,

Who of their female band have made me head;
And so would make another who in fight,
Like me, ten opposites to death would smite."

Sir Guido is besought of them to say
 Why there appear so few of the male race,
 And to declare if women there bear sway
 O'er men, as men o'er them in other place.
 He; "Since my fortune has been here to stay,
 I oftentimes have heard relate the case;
 And now, according to the story told,
 Will, since it pleases you, the cause unfold.

"When, after twenty years, the Grecian host
 Returned from Troy (ten years' hostility
 The town endured, ten weary years were tost
 The Greeks, detained by adverse winds at sea),
 They found their women had, for comforts lost,
 And pangs of absence, learned a remedy;
 And, that they might not freeze alone in bed,
 Chosen young lovers in their husbands' stead.

"With others' children filled the Grecian crew
 Their houses found, and by consent was past
 A pardon to their women; for they knew
 How ill they could endure so long a fast.
 But the adulterous issue, as their due,
 To seek their fortunes on the world were cast;
 Because the husbands would not suffer more
 The striplings should be nourished from their store.

"Some are exposed, and others underhand
 Their kindly mothers shelter and maintain;
 While the adults, in many a various band,
 Some here, some there dispersed, their living gain.
 Arms are the trade of some, by some are scanned
 Letters and arts; another tills the plain;
 One serves in court, by other guided go
 The herd as pleases her who rules below.

"A boy departed with these youthful peers,
Who was of cruel Clytemnestra born;
Like lily fresh (he numbered eighteen years)
Or blooming rose, new-gathered from the thorn.
He having armed a bark, his pinnacle steers
In search of plunder, o'er the billows borne.
With him a hundred other youths engage,
Picked from all Greece, and of their leader's age.

"The Cretans, who had banished in that day
Idomeneus, the tyrant of their land,
And their new state to strengthen and upstay,
Were gathering arms and levying martial band,
Phalantus' service by their goodly pay
Purchased (so hight the youth who sought that
strand),
And all those others that his fortune run,
Who the Dictæan city garrison.

"Amid the hundred cities of old Crete,
Was the Dictæan the most rich and bright;
Of fair and amorous dames the joyous seat,
Joyous with festive sports from morn to night;
And (as her townsmen aye were wont to greet
The stranger) with such hospitable rite
They welcomed these, it little lacked but they
Granted them o'er their households sovereign sway.

"Youthful and passing fair were all the crew,
The flower of Greece, whom bold Phalantus led;
So that with those fair ladies at first view,
Stealing their hearts, full well the striplings sped.
Since, fair in deed as show, they good and true
Lovers evinced themselves and bold in bed.
And in few days to them so grateful proved,
Above all dearest things they were beloved.

"After the war was ended on accord,
 For which were hired Phalantus and his train,
 And pay withdrawn, nor longer by the sword
 Was aught that the adventurous youth can gain,
 And they, for this, anew would go abroad,
 The unhappy Cretan women more complain,
 And fuller tears on this occasion shed,
 Than if their fathers lay before them dead.

"Long time and sorely all the striplings bold
 Were, each apart, by them implored to stay;
 Who since the fleeting youths they cannot hold,
 Leave brother, sire, and son, with these to stray,
 Of jewels and of weighty sums of gold
 Spoiling their households ere they wend their way.
 For so well was the plot concealed, no wight
 Throughout all Crete was privy to their flight.

"So happy was the hour, so fair the wind,
 When young Phalantus chose his time to flee,
 They many miles had left the isle behind,
 Ere Crete lamented her calamity.
 Next, uninhabited by human kind,
 This shore received them wandering o'er the sea.
 'Twas here they settled, with the plunder reft,
 And better weighed the issue of their theft.

"With amorous pleasures teemed this place of rest,
 For ten days, to that roving company:
 But, as oft happens that in youthful breast
 Abundance brings with it satiety.
 To quit their women, with one wish possess,
 The band resolved to win their liberty,
 For never burden does so sore oppress
 As woman, when her love breeds weariness.

“They, who are covetous of spoil and gain,
And ill-bested withal in stipend, know
That better means are wanted to maintain
So many paramours than shaft and bow;
And leaving thus alone the wretched train,
Thence, with their riches charged the adventurers go
For Puglia’s pleasant land; there founded near
The sea, Tarentum’s city, as I hear.

“The women when they find themselves betrayed
Of lovers by whose faith they set most store,
For many ways remain so sore dismayed,
That they seem lifeless statues on the shore.
But seeing lamentations nothing aid,
And fruitless are the many tears they pour,
Begin to meditate, amid their pains,
What remedy for such an ill remains.

“Some laying their opinions now before
The others, deem that to return to Crete
Is in their sad estate the wiser lore,
Throwing themselves at sire and husband’s feet,
Than in those wilds, and on that desert shore,
To pine of want. Another troop repeat,
They should esteem it were a worthier notion
To cast themselves into the neighboring ocean;

“And lighter ill, if they as harlots went
About the world, beggars or slaves to be,
Than offer up themselves for punishment,
Well merited by their iniquity.
Such and like schemes the unhappy dames present,
Each harder than the other. Finally,
One Orontea amid these upstood,
Who drew her origin from Minos’ blood.

"Youngest and fairest of the crew betrayed
 She was, and wariest, and who least had erred,
 Who to Phalantus' arms had come a maid,
 And left for him her father; she in word,
 As well as in a kindling face, displayed
 How much with generous wrath her heart was stirred;
 Then, reprobating all advised before,
 Spake, and adopted saw her better lore.

"She would not leave the land they were upon,
 Whose soil was fruitful, and whose air was sane,
 Throughout which many limpid rivers run,
 Shaded with woods, and for the most part plain;
 With creek and port, where stranger bark could shun
 Foul wind or storm, which vexed the neighboring
 main,
 That might from Afric or from Egypt bring
 Victual or other necessary thing.

"For vengeance (she opined) they there should stay
 Upon man's sex, which had so sore offended.
 She willed each bark and crew which to that bay
 For shelter from the angry tempest wended,
 They should, without remorse, burn, sack, and slay,
 Nor mercy be to any one extended.
 Such was the lady's motion, such the course
 Adopted; and the statute put in force.

"The women, when they see the changing heaven
 Turbid with tempest, hurry to the strand,
 With savage Orontea, by whom given
 Was the fell law, the ruler of the land;
 And of all barks into their haven driven
 Make havoc dread with fire and murderous brand,
 Leaving no man alive, who may diffuse
 Upon this side or that the dismal news.

“ ’Twas thus with the male sex at enmity,
Some years the lonely women lived forlorn;
Then found that hurtful to themselves would be
The scheme, save changed; for if from them were born
None to perpetuate their empery,
The idle law would soon be held in scorn,
And fail together with the unfruitful reign,
Which they had hoped eternal should remain.

“So that some deal its rigor they allay,
And in four years, of all who made repair
Thither, by chance conducted to this bay,
Chose out ten vigorous cavaliers and fair;
That for endurance in the amorous play
Against those hundred dames good champions were—
A hundred they; and, of the chosen men,
A husband was assigned to every ten.

“Ere this, too feeble to abide the test,
Many a one on scaffold lost his head.
Now these ten warriors so approved the best,
Were made partakers of their rule and bed;
First swearing at the sovereign ladies’ hest,
That they, if others to that port are led,
No mercy shall to any one afford,
But one and all will put them to the sword.

“To swell, and next to child, and thence to fear,
The women, turned to teeming wives, began,
Lest they in time so many males should bear
As might invade the sovereignty they plan,
And that the government they hold so dear
Might finally from them revert to man.
And so, while these are children yet, take measure,
They never shall rebel against their pleasure.

"That the male sex may not usurp the sway.

It is enacted by the statute fell,
 Each mother should one boy preserve, and slay
 The others, or abroad exchange or sell.
 For this, they these to various parts convey,
 And to the bearers of the children tell,
 To truck the boys for girls in foreign lands,
 Or not, at least, return with empty hands.

"Nor by the women one preserved would be.

If they without them could the race maintain.
 Such all their mercy, all the clemency
 The law accords for theirs, not others' gain.
 The dames all others sentence equally;
 And temper but in this their statute's pain,
 That, not as was their former practice, they
 All in their rage promiscuously slay.

"Did ten or twenty persons, or yet more,

Arrive, they were imprisoned and put by;
 And every day one only from the store
 Of victims was brought out by lot to die,
 In fane by Orontea built, before
 An altar raised to Vengeance; and to ply
 As headsman, and dispatch the unhappy men,
 One was by lot selected from the ten.

"To that foul murderous shore by chance did fare,

After long years elapsed, a youthful wight,
 Whose fathers sprung from good Alcides were,
 And he, of proof in arms, Elbanio hight;
 There was he seized, of peril scarce aware,
 As unsuspecting such a foul despite;
 And, closely guarded, into prison flung,
 Kept for like cruel use the rest among.

“Adorned with every fair accomplishment,
Of pleasing face and manners was the peer,
And of a speech so sweet and eloquent,
Him the deaf adder might have stopped to hear;
So that of him to Alexandria went
Tiding as of a precious thing and rare.
She was the daughter of that matron bold,
Queen Orontea, that still lived, though old.

“Yet Orontea lived, while of that shore
The other settlers all were dead and gone;
And now ten times as many such or more
Had into strength and greater credit grown.
Nor for ten forges, often closed, in store
Have the ill-furnished band more files than one;
And the ten champions have as well the care
To welcome shrewdly all who thither fare.

“Young Alexandria, who the blooming peer
Burned to behold so praised on every part,
The special pleasure him to see and hear
Won from her mother; and, about to part
From him, discovers that the cavalier
Remains the master of her tortured heart;
Finds herself bound, and that 'tis vain to stir,
A captive made by her own prisoner.

“ ‘If pity,’ said Elbanio, ‘lady fair,
Was in this cruel region known, as through
All other countries, near or distant, where
The wandering sun sheds light and coloring hue,
I by your beauty's kindly charms should dare
(Which make each gentle spirit bound to you)
To beg my life; which always, at your will,
Should I be ready for your love to spill.

“ ‘But since deprived of all humanity
 Are human bosoms in this cruel land,
 I shall not now request my life of thee,
 (For fruitless would, I know, be the demand);
 But, whether a good knight or bad I be,
 Ask but like such to die with arms in hand,
 And not as one condemned to penal pain,
 Or like brute beast in sacrifice be slain.’

“The gentle maid, her eye bedimm’d with tear,
 In pity for the hapless youth, replied:
 ‘Though this land be more cruel and severe
 Than any other country, far and wide,
 Each woman is not a Medæa here
 As thou wouldst make her; and, if all beside
 Were of such evil kind, in me alone
 Should an exception to the rest be known.

“ ‘And though I, like so many here, of yore
 Was full of evil deeds and cruelty,
 I can well say I never had before
 A fitting subject for my clemency.
 But fiercer were I than a tiger, more
 Hard were my heart than diamond, if in me
 All hardness did not vanish and give place
 Before your courage, gentleness, and grace.

“ ‘Ah! were the cruel statute less severe
 Against the stranger to these shores conveyed!
 So should I not esteem by death too dear
 A ransom for thy worthier life were paid.
 But none is here so great, sir cavalier,
 Nor of such puissance as to lend thee aid;
 And what thou askest, though a scanty grace,
 Were difficult to compass in this place.

“ ‘And yet will I endeavor to obtain
For thee, before thou perish, this content;
Though much, I fear, ’twill but augment thy pain,
And thee protracted death but more torment.’
‘So I the ten encounter,’ said again
Elbanio, ‘I at heart am confident
Myself to save, and enemies to slay;
Though made of iron were the whole array.’

“To this the youthful Alexandria naught
Made answer, saving with a piteous sigh;
And from the conference a bosom brought,
Gored with deep wounds, beyond all remedy.
To Orontea she repaired, and wrought
On her to will the stripling should not die,
Should he display such courage and such skill
As with his single hand the ten to kill.

“Queen Orontea straightway bade unite
Her council, and bespoke the assembled band:
‘It still behooves us place the prowdest wight
Whom we can find, to guard our ports and strand,
And, to discover whom to take or slight,
’Tis fitting that we prove the warrior’s hand;
Lest, to our loss, the election made be wrong,
And we enthrone the weak and slay the strong.

“ ‘I deem it fit, if you the counsel shown
Deem fit as well, in future to ordain,
That each upon our coast by Fortune thrown,
Before he in the temple shall be slain,
Shall have the choice, instead of this, alone
Battle against ten others to maintain;
And if he conquer, shall the port defend
With other comrades, pardoned to that end.

“I say this, since to strive against our ten
 It seems that one imprisoned here will dare:
 Who, if he stands against so many men,
 By Heaven, deserves that we should hear his prayer;
 But if he rashly boasts himself, again
 As worthily due punishment should bear.’
 “Here Orontea ceased; on the other side,
 To her the oldest of the dames replied:

“The leading cause, for which to entertain
 This intercourse with men we first agreed,
 Was not because we, to defend this reign,
 Of their assistance stood in any need;
 For we have skill and courage to maintain
 This of ourselves, and force, withal, to speed.
 Would that we could in all as well avail
 Without their succor, nor succession fail!

“But since this may not be, we some have made
 (These few) partakers of our company;
 That, ten to one, we be not overlaid;
 Nor they possess them of the sovereignty.
 Not that we for protection need their aid,
 But simply to increase and multiply,
 Then be their powers to this sole feat addressed.
 And be they sluggards, idle for the rest.

“To keep among us such a puissant wight
 Our first design would render wholly vain.
 If one can singly slay ten men in fight,
 How many women can he not restrain?
 If our ten champions had possessed such might,
 They the first day would have usurped the reign.
 To arm a hand more powerful than your own
 Is an ill method to maintain the throne.

“ Reflect withal, that if your prisoner speed
So that he kill ten champions in the fray,
A hundred women's cry, whose lords will bleed
Beneath his falchion, shall your ears dismay.
Let him not 'scape by such a murderous deed;
But, if he would, propound some other way.
Yet if he of those ten supply the place,
And please a hundred women, grant him grace.’

“ This was severe Artemia's sentiment
(So was she named), and had her counsel weighed,
Elbanio to the temple had been sent,
To perish by the sacrificial blade.
But Orontea, willing to content
Her daughter, to the matron answer made,
And urged so many reasons, and so wrought,
The yielding senate granted what she sought.

“ Elbanio's beauty (for so rare to view
Never was any cavalier beside)
So strongly works upon the youthful crew,
Which in that council sit the state to guide,
That the opinion of the older few
That like Artemia think, is set aside;
And little lacks but that the assembled race
Absolve Elbanio by especial grace.

“ To pardon him in fine the dames agreed;
But, after slaying his half-score, and when
He in the next assault as well should speed,
Not with a hundred women, but with ten;
And, furnished to his wish with arms and steed,
Next day he was released from dungeon-den,
And singly with ten warriors matched in plain,
Who by his arm successively were slain.

"He to new proof was put the following night,
 Against ten damsels naked and alone;
 When so successful was the stripling's might,
 He took the 'say of all the troop, and won
 Such grace with Orontea, that the knight
 Was by the dame adopted for her son;
 And from her Alexandria had to wife,
 With those whom he had proved in amorous strife.

"And him she left with Alexandria, heir
 To this famed city, which from her was hight,
 So he and all who his successors were,
 Should guard the law which willed, whatever wight,
 Conducted hither by his cruel star,
 Upon this miserable land did light,
 Should have his choice to perish by the knife,
 Or singly with ten foes contend in strife.

"And if he should dispatch the men by day,
 At night should prove him with the female crew;
 And if so fortunate that in this play
 He proved again the conqueror, he, as due,
 The female band, as prince and guide, should sway,
 And his ten consorts at his choice renew,
 And reign with them, till other should arrive
 Of stouter hand, and him of life deprive.

"They for two thousand years nigh passed away
 This usage have maintained, and still maintain
 The impious rite; and rarely passes day
 But stranger wight is slaughtered in the fane.
 If he, Elbanio-like, ten foes assay
 (And such sometimes is found) he oft is slain
 In the first charge; nor, in a thousand one
 The other feat, of which I spake, has done.

"Yet some there are have done it, though so few
They may be numbered on the fingers; one
Of the victorious cavaliers, but who
Reigned with his ten short time, was Argilon:
For, smote by me, whom ill wind hither blew,
The knight to his eternal rest is gone.
Would I with him that day had filled a grave,
Rather than in such scorn survive a slave!

"For amorous pleasures, laughter, game, and play,
Which evermore delight the youthful breast,
The gem, the purple garment, rich array,
And in his city place before the rest,
Little, by Heaven, the wretched man appay
Who of his liberty is dispossessed;
And not to have the power to leave this shore
To me seems shameful servitude and sore.

"To know I wear away life's glorious spring
In such effeminate and slothful leisure
Is to my troubled heart a constant sting,
And takes away the taste of every pleasure.
Fame bears my kindred's praise on outstretched wing,
Even to the skies; and haply equal measure
I of the glories of my blood might share
If I united with my brethren were.

"Methinks my fate does such injurious deed
By me, condemned to servitude so base,
As he who turns to grass the generous steed
To run amid the herd of meaner race,
Because unfit for war or worthier meed,
Through blemish, or disease of sight or pace.
Nor hoping but by death, alas! to fly
So vile a service, I desire to die."

Here Guido ceased to address the martial peers,
 And cursed withal the day, in high disdain,
 That he achieved o'er dames and cavaliers
 The double victory which bestowed that reign.
 Astolpho hides his name, and silent hears,
 Until to him by many a sign is plain
 That this Sir Guido is, as he had said,
 The issue of his kinsman Aymon's bed.

Then cried: "The English duke, Astolpho, I
 Thy cousin am," and clipt him round the waist,
 And in a kindly act of courtesy,
 Not without weeping, kissed him and embraced.
 Then, "Kinsman dear, thy birth to certify
 No better sign thy mother could have placed
 About thy neck. Enough! that sword of thine
 And courage, vouch thee of our valiant line."

Guido who gladly would in other place
 So near a kin have welcomed, in dismay
 Beholds him here and with a mournful face;
 Knowing, if he himself survives the fray,
 Astolpho will be doomed to slavery base,
 His fate deferred but till the following day;
 And he shall perish, if the duke is free:
 So that one's good the other's ill shall be.

He grieves, as well, the other cavaliers
 Should through his means for ever captive be;
 Nor, that he should, if slain, those martial peers
 Deliver by his death from slavery.
 Since if Marphisa from one quicksand clears
 The troop, yet these from other fails to free,
 She will have won the victory in vain;
 For they will be enslaved, and she be slain.

On the other hand, the stripling's age, in May
Of youth, with courtesy and valor fraught,
Upon the maid and comrades with such sway,
Touching their breasts with love and pity, wrought
That they of freedom, for which he must pay
The forfeit of his life, nigh loathed the thought;
And if Marphisa him perforce must kill,
She is resolved as well herself to spill.

"Join thou with us," she to Sir Guildo cried,
"And we from hence will sally." "From within
These walls to sally," Guido on his side
Answered, "Ne'er hope. With me you lose or win."
"I fear not, I," the martial maid replied,
"To execute whatever I begin;
Nor know what can securer path afford
Than that which I shall open with my sword.

"Such proof of thy fair prowess have I made,
With thee I every enterprise would dare.
To-morrow when about the palisade
The crowds assembled in the circus are,
Let us on every side the mob invade,
Whether they fly or for defense prepare;
Then give the town to fire, and on their bed
Of earth to wolf and vulture leave the dead."

He: "Ready shalt thou find me in the strife
To follow thee, or perish at thy side:
But let us hope not to escape with life.
Enough, is vengeance somedeal satisfied
Ere death; for oft ten thousand, maid and wife,
I in the place have witnessed; and, outside,
As many castle, wall and port defend.
Nor know I certain way from hence to wend."

"And were there more," Marphisa made reply,
 "Than Xerxes led, our squadron to oppose,
 More than those rebel spirits from the sky
 Cast out to dwell amid perpetual woes,
 All in one day should by this weapon die,
 Wert thou with me, at least, not with my foes."
 To her again: "No project but must fail,"
 Sir Guido said, "I know, save this avail.

"This only us can save, should it succeed;
 This, which but now remembered I shall teach.
 To dames alone our laws the right concede
 To sally, or set foot upon the beach,
 And hence to one of mine in this our need
 Must I commit myself, and aid beseech;
 Whose love for me, by perfect friendship tied,
 Has oft by better proof than this been tried.

"No less than me would she desire that I
 Should 'scape from slavery, so she went with me;
 And that, without her rival's company,
 She of my lot should sole partaker be,
 She bark or pinnace, in the harbor nigh,
 Shall bid, while yet 'tis dark, prepare for sea,
 Which shall await your sailors, rigged and yare
 For sailing, when they thither shall repair.

"Behind me, in a solid band comprest,
 Ye merchants, mariners and warriors, who,
 Driven to this city, have set up your rest
 Beneath this roof (for which my thanks are due),
 You have to force your way with steadfast breast,
 If adversaries interrupt our crew.
 'Tis thus I hope, by succor of the sword,
 To clear a passage through the cruel horde."

"Do as thou wilt;" Marphisa made reply,
 "I of escape am confidant withal;
And likelier 'twere that by my hand should die
 The martial race, encompassed by this wall,
Than any one should ever see me fly,
 Or guess by other sign that fears appal.
I would my passage force in open day,
And shameful in my sight were other way.

"I wot if I were for a woman known,
 Honor and place from women I might claim,
Here gladly entertained, and classed as one
 Haply among their chiefs of highest fame;
But privilege or favor will I none
 Unshared by those with whom I hither came.
Too base it were, did I depart or free
Remain, to leave the rest in slavery."

Sir Guidō speaks that night with Alery
 (So the most faithful of his wives was hight),
Nor needs long prayer to make the dame agree,
 Disposed already to obey the knight.
She takes a ship and arms the bark for sea,
 Stowed with her richest chattels for their flight;
Feigning design, as soon as dawn ensues,
To sail with her companions on a cruise.

She into Guido's palace had before
 Bid sword and spear and shield and cuirass bear;
With the intent to furnish from this store,
 Merchants and sailors that half naked were.
Some watch, and some repose upon the floor,
 And rest and guard among each other share;
Oft marking, still with harness on their backs,
If ruddy yet with light the orient wax.

Not yet from earth's hard visage has the sun
 Lifted her veil of dim and dingy dye;
 Scarcely Lycaon's child, her furrow done,
 Has turned about her plowshares in the sky,
 When to the theater the women run
 Who would the fearful battle's end espy,
 As swarming bees upon their threshold cluster,
 Who bent on change of realm in springtide muster.

With warlike trumpet, drum, and sound of horn,
 The people make the land and welkin roar;
 Summoning thus their chieftain to return,
 And end the unfinished warfare. Covered o'er
 With arms stand Aquilant and Gryphon stern,
 And the redoubted Duke from England's shore.
 Marphisa, Dudo, Sansonet, and all
 The knights or footmen harbored in that hall.

Hence to descend toward the sea or port
 The way across the place of combat lies;
 Nor was there other passage, long or short.
 Sir Guido so to his companions cries;
 And having ceased his comrades to exhort
 To do their best, set forth in silent wise,
 And in the place appeared, amid the throng,
 Head of a squad above a hundred strong.

Toward the other gate Sir Guido went,
 Hurrying his band, but, gathered far and nigh
 The mighty multitude, for aye intent
 To smite, and clad in arms, when they descry
 The comrades whom he leads, perceive his bent,
 And truly deem he is about to fly.
 All in a thought betake them to their bows,
 And at the portal part the knight oppose.

Sir Guido and the cavaliers who go
Beneath that champion's guidance, and before
The others bold Marphisa, were not slow
To strike, and labored hard to force the door,
But such a storm of darts from ready bow,
Dealing on all sides death, or wounding sore,
Was rained in fury on the troop forlorn,
They feared at last to encounter skaith and scorn.

Of proof the corslet was each warrior wore,
Who without this would have had worse to fear;
Sansonet's horse was slain, and that which bore
Marphisa; to himself the English peer
Exclaimed, "Why wait I longer? As if more
My horn could ever succor me than here.
Since the sword stands not, I will make assay
If with my bugle I can clear the way."

As he was customed in extremity,
He to his mouth applied the bugle's round;
The wide world seemed to tremble, earth and sky,
As he in air discharged the horrid sound.
Such terror smote the dames, that, bent to fly,
When in their ears the deafening horn was wound,
Not only they the gate unguarded left,
But from the circus reeled, of wit bereft.

As family, awaked in sudden wise,
Leaps from the windows and from lofty height,
Periling life and limb, when in surprise
They see now near the fire's encircling light,
Which had, while slumber sealed their heavy eyes,
By little and by little waxed at night.
Reckless of life, thus each, impelled by dread,
At sound of that appalling bugle fled.

Above, below, and here and there, the rout
 Rise in confusion and attempt to fly.
 At once, above a thousand swarm about
 Each entrance, to each other's let, and lie
 In heaps; from window these, or stage without,
 Leap headlong; in the press these smothered die.
 Broken is many an arm, and many a head;
 And one lies crippled, and another dead.

But of Marphisa what will be your thought,
 And Guido late so furious?—of the two
 Young sons of Oliver, that lately wrought
 Such deeds in honor of their lineage?—who
 Lately a hundred thousand held as naught,
 And now, deprived of courage, basely flew,
 As ring-doves flutter and as conies fly,
 Who hear some mighty noise resounding nigh.

For so to friend as stranger, noxious are
 The powers that in the enchanted horn reside.
 Sansonet, Guido, follow, with the pair
 Of brethren bold, Marphisa terrified.
 Nor flying, can they to such distance fare,
 But that their ears are dinned. On every side
 Astolpho, on his foaming courser borne,
 Lends louder breath to his enchanted horn.

One sought the sea, and one the mountain-top,
 One fled to hide herself in forest hoar;
 And this, who turned not once nor made a stop,
 Not for ten days her headlong flight forbore:
 These from the bridge in that dread moment drop,
 Never to climb the river's margin more.
 So temple, house, and square and street were drained,
 That nigh unpeopled the wide town remained.

Marphisa, Guido, and the brethren two,
With Sansonetto, pale and trembling, hie
Toward the sea, and behind these the crew
Of frightened mariners and merchants fly;
And 'twixt the forts, in bark, prepared with view
To their escape, discover Alery;
Who in sore haste receives the warriors pale,
And bids them ply their oars and make all sail.

The Duke within and out the town had beat
From the surrounding hills to the sea-side,
And of its people emptied every street.
All fly before the deafening sound, and hide;
Many in panic, seeking a retreat,
Lurk, in some place obscure and filthy stied;
Many, not knowing whither to repair,
Plunge in the neighboring sea, and perish there.

The Duke arrives, seeking the friendly band,
Whom he had hoped to find upon the quay.
He turns and gazes round the desert strand,
And none is there—directs along the bay
His eyes, and now, far distant from the land,
Beholds the parting frigate under way.
So that the paladin for his escape,
The vessel gone, must other project shape.

Let him depart! nor let it trouble you
That he so long a road must beat alone;
Where, never without fear, man journeys through
Wild paynim countries; danger is there none,
But what he with his bugle may eschew,
Whose dread effect the English Duke has shown;
And let his late companions be our care,
Who trembling to the beach had made repair.

They from that cruel and ensanguined ground
 To seaward, under all their canvas, bore;
 And having gained such offing that the sound
 Of that alarming horn was heard no more,
 Unwonted shame inflicted such a wound,
 That all a face of burning crimson wore.
 One dares not eye the other, and they stand
 With downcast looks, a mute and mournful band.

[To be read after page 176.]

Of him I told who felt at heart such load,
 Reflecting she beneath his charge must go,
 He spake no word; and thus in silent mode
 Both fared, so sullen was Zerbino's woe.
 But presently their silence, as they rode,
 Was broke, when Sol his hindmost wheels did show,
 By an adventurous errant cavalier,
 Who in mid pathway met the crone and peer.

The hag, who the approaching warrior knew
 (Hermonides of Holland he was hight),
 That bore upon a field of sable hue
 A bar of vermeil tint, transversely dight,
 Did humbly now to good Zerbino sue—
 Her pride abased and look of haught despite—
 And him reminded of the promise made,
 When her Marphisa to his care conveyed.

Because as foe to her and hers she knew
 The knight they were encountering, who had slain
 Her only brother and her father true;
 And was advised the traitor would be fain
 By her, the remnant of her race, to do
 What he had perpetrated on the twain.
 "Woman, while guarded by my arm," he said,
 "I will not thou shouldst any danger dread."

As nearer now, the stranger knight espied
That face which was so hateful in his sight,
With menacing and savage voice he cried,
"Either with me prepare thyself to fight,
Or arm thee not on that old woman's side,
Who by my hand shall perish, as is right.
If thou contendest for her, thou art slain;
For such their portion is who wrong maintain."

Him young Zerbino answered courteously,
'Twas sign of evil and ungenerous will,
And corresponded not with chivalry,
That he a woman should desire to kill;
Yet if the knight persists, he will not flee,
But bids him well consider first how ill
'Twould sound, that he, a gentle knight and good,
Should wish to dip his hand in woman's blood.

This and yet more he vainly says; nor stand
They idle long; from word they pass to deed;
And having compass'd on the level land
Enough of ground, encounter on the mead.
Not fired in some rejoicing, from the hand
Discharged, so fast the whistling rockets speed,
As the two coursers bear the cavaliers
To hurtle in mid space with rested spears.

Hermonides of Holland leveled low,
And for the youth's left flank the stroke intended;
But his weak lance was shivered by the blow,
And little the opposing Scot offended;
But vain was not the spear thrust of his foe,
Who bored his opposite's good shield, and rended
His shoulder, by the lance pierced through and through,
And good Hermonides on earth o'erthrew.

Thinking him slain who only lay amazed,
 By pity prest, Zerbino leapt to ground,
 And from his death-like face the vizor raised;
 And he, as wakened out of sleep profound,
 In silence, hard upon Zerbino gazed;
 Then cried, "It does not me, in truth, confound,
 To think that I am overthrown by thee,
 Who seem'st the flower of errant chivalry.

"But it with reason grieves me this is done
 Upon account of a false woman's spite;
 Whose wicked cause I know not why you own,
 An office ill according with your might;
 And when to you the occasion shall be known
 Which urges me her wickedness to quite,
 Whene'er you think on it, you will repent
 How she by you was saved, and I was shent.

"And if enough of breath, although I fear
 The contrary, is left me to expound
 Her evil actions, I shall make appear
 She in all guilt transgresses every bound.
 I had a brother once; the youthful peer
 Set out from Holland's isle, our natal ground,
 To serve Heraclius, 'mid his knights arrayed,
 Who then the Grecian empire's scepter swayed.

"Brother in arms and bosom-friend installed
 Here was he by a baron of that court,
 Who, in a pleasant site, and strongly walled,
 On Servia's distant frontier had a fort.
 Argæus he of whom I tell was called,
 Husband of that ill hag, whom in such sort
 He loved, as passed all mean, and misbecame
 One of his worth and honorable fame.

"But she, more volatile than leaf, when breeze
Of autumn most its natural moisture dries,
And strips the fluttering foliage from the trees,
Which, blown about, before its fury flies,
Changes her humor, and her husband sees,
Whom she some time had loved, with other eyes,
And in her every wish and every thought
Schemes how my brother's love may best be bought.

"But not Acroceraunus fronts the brine,
Ill-famed, against whose base the billow heaves,
Nor against Boreas stands the mountain pine,
That has a hundred times renewed its leaves,
And towering high on Alp or Apennine,
With its fast root the rock as deeply cleaves,
So firmly as the youth resists the will
Of that foul woman, sink of every ill.

"Now, as it oft befalls a cavalier
Who seeks and finds adventure, high and low,
It happened that my gentle brother near
His comrade's fort was wounded by a foe;
Where often, uninvited by the peer,
He guested, was his host with him or no;
And thither he resorted from the field.
There to repose until his wounds were healed.

"While there he wounded lay, upon some need
It chanced Argæus was compelled to ride.
Quickly that wanton, from his presence freed
As was her use, my brother's fealty tried.
But he, as one unstained in thought and deed,
So fell a goad no longer would abide;
And to preserve his faith, as lures increased,
Of many evils chose what seemed the least.

"To break communion with the cavalier,
 To him, of many, seemed the lightest ill,
 And go so far, that wanton should not hear
 More of his name. This purpose to fulfil
 Was honester, though quitting one so dear
 Was hard, than to content her evil will,
 Or her foul wishes to her lord impart,
 Who cherished her as fondly as his heart.

"And though still smarting with his wounds and pined,
 He dons his arms, and from the tower departs;
 And wanders thence with firm and constant mind,
 Ne'er to return again into those parts.
 But naught availed the purpose he designed;
 His projects Fortune baffled with new arts.
 This while, behold! the castellan returned,
 And bathed in bitter tears the wife discerned.

"And with flushed face, and hair in disarray,
 He asks of her what had disturbed her mood;
 Who, ere she in reply a word will say,
 Is vainly more than once to answer wooed;
 And all the while is thinking in what way
 The knight can best with vengeance be pursued.
 And well it suited with her fickle vein,
 Lightly to change her love into disdain.

"'Ah! why should I conceal,' in fine she cried,
 'The fault committed while you were away?
 For though I it from all the world should hide,
 This would my conscience to myself bewray.
 The soul that is with secret evil dyed
 Does with such penitence its fault appay,
 As every corporal sufferance exceeds
 That thou couldst deal me for my evil deeds;

“ ‘If evil be the deed, when done perforce.

But, be it what it may, the mischief know;
Then, with thy sword from this polluted corse
Delivered, let my spotless spirit go;
And quench these wretched eyes, which in remorse
I, if I lived, on earth must ever throw,
As the last penance of so foul a blame,
And, look on whom they may, must blush for shame.

“ ‘My honor has been ruined by thy mate,

Who to this body violence has done,
And fearing lest I all to thee relate,
Without farewell the graceless churl is gone.’
“She by this story made her husband hate
The youth, than whom before was dearer none.
Argæus credits all, without delay
Arms him, and, breathing vengeance, posts away.

“In knowledge of that country not to seek,

He overtook the knight in little space;
For my poor brother, still diseased and weak,
Rode, unsuspecting, at an easy pace;
Argæus, eager his revenge to wreak,
Assailed him straight in a sequestered place.
My brother would excuse him if he might,
But his indignant host insists on fight.

“This one was sound and full of new disdain,

That weak and friendly, as aye wont to be.
My brother was ill fitted to sustain
His altered comrade’s new-born enmity.
Philander, then unmeriting such pain
(So was the stripling named, described by me),
Not gifted with the power to undergo
Such fierce assault, was taken by the foe.

" 'Forbid it, Heaven! I should be led astray
 So by just wrath and thy iniquity,'
 To him Argæus cried, 'as thee to slay,
 Who loved thee once, and certes thou lovedst me,
 Though in the end thou ill didst this display,
 I yet desire this ample world may see
 That, measured by my deeds, I rank above
 Thyself in hate as highly as in love.

" 'In other mode shall I chastise the deed,
 Than spilling more of thine ill blood.' The peer,
 This said, commands his followers, on a steed,
 Of verdant boughs composed, to place a bier,
 And with the knight half-lifeless homeward speed,
 And in a tower enclose the cavalier;
 There dooms the guiltless stripling to remain,
 And suffer prisonment's perpetual pain.

"Yet nothing but his former liberty
 Thence to depart was wanting to the knight;
 In all the rest, as one at large and free,
 He ordered, and was still obeyed aright.
 But that ill dame her former phantasy
 Pursuing ever with unwearied sprite,
 Having the keys, repaired nigh every day
 To the close turret where the prisoner lay.

"And evermore my brother she assailed,
 And with more boldness prest her former suit.
 'Mark what to thee fidelity availed!'
 She cries, 'which all mere perfidy repute.
 With what triumphant joy shalt thou be hailed!
 What noble spoils are thine, what happy fruit!
 Oh what a worthy guerdon is thy meed!
 Branded by all men for a traitor's deed!

“ ‘How well thou mightst have given, without stain
Of thine own honor, what I sought of thee!
Now of so rigorous mood the worthy gain
Have and enjoy. In close captivity
Thou art; nor ever hope to break thy chain,
Unless thou soften thy obduracy.
But, if compliant, I a mean can frame
To render thee thy liberty and fame.’

“ ‘No, no; have thou no hope,’ replied the knight,
‘That my true faith shall ever change, although
It thus should happen that, against all right,
I should so hard a sentence undergo.
Let the world blame. Enough that in His sight
Who sees and judges everything below,
And in His grace divine my fame can clear,
My innocence unsullied shall appear.

“ ‘Does not Argæus deem enough to sty
Me in his prison, let him take away
This noisome life. Nor yet may Heaven deny
Its meed, though ill the world my work appay.
And yet he who condemns me may, when I
Am parted from this tenement of clay,
Perceive that he has wronged me in the end,
And shall bewail when dead his faithful friend.’

“Thus oftentimes that shameless woman prest
The good Philander, but obtained no fruit.
Nursing her blind desires, which know not rest
In seeking what her wicked love may boot,
She her old vices, in her inmost breast,
Ransacks for what may best the occasion suit,
And sifts them all; then, having overrun
A thousand evil thoughts, resolved on one.

"Six months she waited ere again she sought
 The prisoner's tower, as she was wont before:
 From which the sad Philander hoped and thought
 That love to him the dame no longer bore.
 Lo! Fortune for her an occasion wrought,
 (To evil deed propitious evermore)
 To give effect, with memorable ill,
 To her irrational and evil will.

"The husband had an ancient feud with one
 Who was by name Morando hight the fair;
 Who even within the fort would often run
 In its lord's absence; but the knight's repair
 At the wide distance of ten miles would shun,
 Was he assured the castellan was there;
 Who now, to lure him thither, bruited how
 He for Jerusalem was bound by vow.

"Said he would go; and went. Thus each that spies
 His outset, of his journey spreads the fame:
 Nor he, who only on his wife relies,
 Trusts any with his purpose but the dame,
 And home returned when dusky waxed the skies;
 Nor ever, save at evening, thither came;
 And with changed ensigns, at the dawn of day,
 Unseen of any, always went his way.

"He now on this, now on the other side,
 Roved round his castle but to ascertain
 If credulous Morando, who to ride
 Thither was wonted, would return again.
 All day he in the forest used to hide,
 And, when he saw the sun beneath the main,
 Came to the tower, and, through a secret gate,
 Was there admitted by his faithless mate.

“Thus every one, except his consort ill,
Argæus many miles away suppose;
She, when 'tis time her errand to fulfil,
Hatching new mischief, to my brother goes.
Of tears she has a ready shower at will,
Which from her eyes into her bosom flows.
'Where shall I succor find, now needed most.
So that my honor be not wholly lost,

“ ‘And with my own, my wedded lord's?’ she cries;
‘I should feel no alarm, if he were here.
Thou know'st Moranda, know if deities
Or men he in Argæus' absence fear.
He at this time tries all extremities;
Nor servant have I but by threat or prayer
He him to further his desire has swayed:
Nor know I whither to recur for aid.

“ ‘Of my lord's absence hearing the report,
And that he would not quickly homeward fare,
He had the insolence within my court,
Upon no other pretext to repair;
Who, were my absent lord within his fort,
So bold a deed not only would not dare,
But would not deem himself secure withal,
By Heaven! at three miles' distance from his wall

“ ‘And what he erst by messenger had sought,
From me to-day has sued for face to face;
And in such manner that long time I thought
Dishonor must have followed and disgrace;
And if I had not humbly him besought,
And feigned to yield to him with ready grace,
He haply would have ravish'd that by force,
Which he expects to win by milder course.

" 'I promise, not designing to comply,
 For void is contract made in fear; alone
 From his ill purpose would I put him by,
 And what he then perforce would else have done.
 So stands the case; the single remedy
 Lies in yourself; my honor else is gone,
 And that of my Argæus; which as dear,
 Or more so, than your own you vowed whilere.

" 'If you refuse me, I shall say you show
 That you have not the faith that you pretended,
 But that in cruelty you said me no,
 When vainly were my tears on you expended,
 And no wise for Argæus' sake, although
 With this pretext you have yourself defended.
 Our loves had been concealed and free from blame;
 But here I stand exposed to certain shame.'

" 'To me such preface needs not,' said anew
 The good Philander, 'bound by amity
 To my Argæus still; thy pleasure shew.
 I what I ever was will be, and I,
 Although from him I bear such ill undue,
 Accuse him not; for him would I defy
 Even death itself; and let the world, allied
 With my ill destiny, against me side!'

"The impious woman answered, ' 'Tis my will
 Thou slay him who would do us foul despite;
 Nor apprehend to encounter any ill;
 For I the certain mean will tell aright.
 He will return, his purpose to fulfil,
 At the third hour, when darkest is the night;
 And, at a preconcerted signal made,
 Be without noise by me within conveyed.

“ ‘Let it not irk thee to await the peer
Within my chamber, where no light will be.
Till I shall make him doff his warlike gear,
And, almost naked, yield him up to thee.’
So did his wife into that quicksand steer
Her hapless husband (it appears to me),
If wife she rightly could be called—more fell
And cruel than a fury sprung from hell.

“She drew my brother forth, that guilty night,
With his good arms in hand, and him again
Secreted in the chamber without light,
Till thither came the wretched castellan.
As it was ordered, all fell out aright,
For seldom ill design is schemed in vain.
So fell Argæus by Philander’s sword,
Who for Morando took the castle’s lord.

“One blow divided head and neck; for naught
Was there of helm, the warrior to defend.
Without a struggle was Argæus brought
To his unhappy life’s disastrous end.
And he who slew him never had such thought,
Nor this would have believed; to aid his friend
Intent (strange chance!) he wrought him in that blow
The worst that could be done by mortal foe.

“When now, unknown, on earth Argæus lay,
My brother to Gabrina gave the blade
(So was she named), who lived but to betray.
She, who discovery had till then delayed,
Wills that Philander with a light survey
The man whom he on earth has lifeless laid,
And she, with the assistance of the light,
Shows him Argæus in the murdered wight.

"And threatens, save he with desires comply
 To which her bosom had been long a prey,
 What he would be unable to deny
 She to the assembled household will display,
 And he like traitor and assassin die,
 Upon her tale, in ignominious way:
 And minds him fame is not to be despised,
 Albeit so little life by him be prized.

"Philander stood oppressed with grief and fear,
 When his mistake to him the woman showed,
 And to have slain her in his wrath went near,
 And long he doubted, so his choler glowed;
 And, but that Reason whispered in his ear
 That he was in an enemy's abode,
 For lack of falchion in his empty sheath,
 He would have torn her piece-meal with his teeth.

"Reason demonstrates with what peril fraught
 His case, not more with death than lasting stain,
 If in the castle were that murder taught;
 Nor any time has he to sift his brain.
 Will he or nill he, in conclusion naught
 Is left him but the bitter cup to drain.
 Thus in his troubled heart prevailing more,
 His fear his resolution overbore.

"The fear of shameful punishment's pursuit
 Made him with many protestations swear
 To grant in everything Gabrina's suit,
 If from the fortilage they safely fare.
 So plucks that impious dame, perforce, the fruit
 Of her desires, and thence retreat the pair.
 Thus home again the young Philander came,
 Leaving behind him a polluted name;

“And deeply graven in his bosom bore
The image of his friend so rashly slain;
By this to purchase, to his torment sore,
A Progne, a Medea; impious gain!
And but his knightly faith, and oaths he swore,
Were to his fury as a curbing rein,
From him when safe she would have met her fate;
But lived subjected to his bitterest hate.

“Thenceforth he never more was seen to smile;
All his discourse was sad, and still ensued
Sobs from his breast; afflicted in the style
Of Vext Orestes, when he in his mood
Had slain his mother and Egisthus vile,
By vengeful furies for the deed pursued.
Till, broken by the ceaseless grief he fed,
He sickened, and betook himself to bed.

“Now in the harlot, when she had discerned
This other set by her so little store,
The former amorous flame was quickly turned
Into despitous rage and hatred sore;
Nor with less wrath she toward my brother burned
Than for Argæus she had felt before;
And she disposed herself, in treasons versed,
To slay her second husband like the first.

“Of a deceitful leech she made assay,
Well fitted for the work she had in hand,
Who better knew what deadly poisons slay
Than he the force of healing syrup scanned;
And promised him his service to repay
With a reward exceeding his demand,
When he should, with some drink of deadly might,
Of her detested husband rid her sight.

"In presence of myself and more beside,
 The wicked elder, with his deadly dole,
 Approaching my unhappy brother, cried,
 It was a sovereign drink to make him whole.
 But here a new device Gabrina tried,
 And, ere the sickly man could taste the bowl,
 To rid her of accomplice in the deed,
 Or to defraud him of his promised meed,

"Seized on his hand, the instant he presented
 The poison to my brother. 'Ill my fear,'
 Exclaimed the dame, 'by you would be resented,
 Excited for a spouse I hold so dear.
 I, that the beverage has not been fermented
 With evil drug and poisonous, will be clear;
 Nor deem it meet that you to him convey
 The proffered bowl, unless you take the 'say.

"In what condition think you, sir, remained
 The wretched elder by his fears opprest?
 Thus by the woman's suddenness constrained,
 He had no time for thinking what were best.
 He, lest more doubt of him be entertained,
 Tastes of the chalice, at Gabrina's hest;
 And the sick man, emboldened so, drinks up
 All the remainder of the poisoned cup.

"This past and done, the leech would homeward speed,
 That he, to counteract the pest he bore
 Within his bowels, in this fearful need,
 Might use some secret of his cunning lore;
 But this the wicked dame would not concede,
 Forbidding him to issue thence before
 His patient's stomach should the juice digest,
 And its restoring power be manifest.

"No prayer will move, nor offered price will buy
The woman's leave to let him thence depart.
The desperate man who saw that death was nigh,
And sure to follow, quickly changed his part;
And told the story to the standers-by;
Nor could she cover it with all her art.
Thus what he wont to do by many a one,
That goodly doctor by himself has done;

"And follows with his soul my brother true,
That hence, already freed, was gone before.
We, the assistants, that the matter knew
From the old man who lingered little more,
Took that abominable monster, who
More cruel was than beast in forest hoar,
And, prisoned in a darksome place, reserved
To perish in the fire, as she deserved."

So said Hermonides, and had pursued
His tale, and told how she from prison fled;
But suffered from his wound a pang so shrewd,
He fell reversed upon his grassy bed.
Meanwhile two squires, who served him in the wood,
A rustic bier of sturdy branches spread.
Their master upon this the servants lay,
Who could not thence be borne in other way.

Zerbino, in excuse, assured the peer,
He grieved so good a knight to have offended;
But, as was still the use of cavalier,
Had guarded her who in his guidance wended;
Nor had he else preserved his honor clear:
For when the dame was to his care commended,
Her to defend his promise he had plight
From all men, to the utmost of his might.

He, if he might, in any thing beside,
 Would readily assist him in his need.
 His only wish, the cavalier replied,
 Was, *he* might be from ill Gabrina freed,
 Ere him some mighty mischief should betide,
 Of future penitence the bitter seed.
 Gabrina keeps on earth her downcast eye;
 For ill the simple truth admits reply.

Zerbino thence, upon the promised way,
 With the old woman in his escort, went,
 And inly cursed her all the livelong day,
 That in her cause that baron he had shent.
 And having heard the knight her guilt display,
 Who was instructed in her evil bent,
 He—if before he had her at despite—
 So loathed her, she was poison to his sight.

Well read in young Zerbino's hate, the dame
 Would not by him in malice be outdone,
 Nor bated him an inch, but in that game
 Of deadly hatred set him two for one.
 Her face was with the venom in a flame
 Wherewith her swelling bosom overrun.
 'Twas thus and in such concord as I say,
 These through the ancient wood pursued their way.

[To be read after page 212.]

"When now she had her, fearless of surprise,
 Safe in a solitary place, that dame,
 By slow degrees, in words and amorous wise,
 Showed her deep-wounded heart; with sighs of flame,
 Breathed from her inmost breast, with burning eyes,
 She spake her soul sick with desire; became
 Now pale, now red; nor longer self-controlled,
 Ravished a kiss, she waxed so passing bold.

"My sister was assured the huntress maid
Falsely conceited her a man to be;
Nor in that need could she afford her aid;
And found herself in sore perplexity.
'Tis better that I now dispel (she said)
The foolish thought she feeds, and that in me
The damsel should a gentle woman scan,
Rather than take me for a craven man.'

"And she said well; for cravenhood it were
Befitting man of straw, nor warrior true,
With whom so bright a lady deigned to pair,
So wondrous sweet and full of nectarous dew,
To clack like a poor cuckoo to the fair
Hanging his coward wing, when he should woo.
Shaping her speech to this in wary mode,
My sister that she was a damsel showed;

"That, like Camilla and like Hyppolite,
Sought fame in battle-field, and near the sea,
In Afric, in Arzilla, saw the light;
To shield and spear enured from infancy.
A spark this quenched not; nor yet burned less bright
The enamored damsel's kindled phantasy.
Too tardy came the salve to ease the smart;
So deep had Love already driven his dart.

"Nor yet less fair to her my sister's face
Appeared, less fair her ways, less fair her guise;
Nor yet the heart returned into its place,
Which joyed itself within those dear-loved eyes.
Flordespine deems the damsel's iron case,
To her desire some hope of ease supplies,
And when she thinks she is indeed a maid,
Laments and sobs, with mighty woe downweighed.

"He who had marked her sorrow and lament
 That day, himself had sorrowed with the fair.
 'What pains,' she said, 'did ever wight torment,
 So cruel, but that mine more cruel were?
 I need not to accomplish my intent,
 In other love, impure or pure, despair;
 The rose I well might gather from the thorn:
 My longing only is of hope forlorn.

" 'If 'twas thy pleasure, Love, to have me shent,
 Because my glad estate thine anger stirred,
 Thou with some torture might'st have been content
 On other lovers used; but never word
 Have I found written of a female bent
 On love of female, mid mankind or herd.
 Woman to woman's beauty still is blind;
 Nor ewe delights in ewe, nor hind in hind.

" 'Tis only I, on earth, in air, or sea,
 Who suffer at thy hands such cruel pain:
 And this thou hast ordained, that I may be
 The first and last example in thy reign.
 Foully did Ninus' wife and impiously
 For her own son a passion entertain;
 Loved was Pasipæ's bull and Myrrha's sire;
 But mine is madder than their worst desire.

" 'Here female upon male had set her will;
 Had hope; and, as I hear, was satisfied.
 Pasiphæe the wooden cow did fill:
 Others, in other mode, their want supplied.
 But, had he flown to me,—with all his skill,
 Dan Dædalus had not the noose untied:
 For one too diligent hath wreathed these strings;
 Even Nature's self, the puissantest of things.'

"So grieves the maid, so goads herself and wears,
And shows no haste her sorrowing to forego;
Sometimes her face, sometimes her tresses tears,
And levels at herself the vengeful blow.
In pity, Bradamant the sorrow shares,
And is constrained to hear the tale of woe.
She studies to divert, with fruitless pain,
The strange and mad desire; but speaks in vain.

"She, who requires assistance, not support,
Still more laments herself, with grief opprest.
By this the waning day was growing short,
For the low sun was crimsoning the west;
A fitting hour for those to seek a port,
Who would not in the wood set up their rest;
When to this city, near her sylvan haunt,
Young Flordespine invited Bradamant.

"My sister the request could ill deny;
And so they came together to the place,
Where, but for you, by that ill squadron I
Had been compelled the cruel flame to face;
There Flordespina made her family
Caress and do my sister no small grace;
And, having in a female robe arrayed,
Passed her on all beholders for a maid.

"Because perceiving vantage there was none
In the male cheer by which she was misled,
The damsel held it wise, reproach to shun,
Which might by any carping tongue be said.
And this the rather, that the ill which one
Of the two garments in her mind had bred,
Now with the other, which revealed the cheat,
She would assay to drive from her conceit.

"The ladies share one common bed that night,
 Their bed the same, but different their repose.
 One sleeps, one groans and weeps in piteous plight,
 Because her wild desire more fiercely glows;
 And on her wearied eyes should slumber light,
 All is deceitful that brief slumber shows.
 To her it seems as if relenting Heaven
 A better sex to Bradamant has given.

"As the sick man with burning thirst distress,
 If he should sleep, ere he that wish fulfil,
 Aye in his troubled, interrupted, rest,
 Remembers him of every once-seen rill:
 So is the damsel's fancy still possest,
 In sleep, with images that glad her will.
 Then from the empty dreams that crowd her brain,
 She wakes, and, waking, finds the vision vain.

"What vows she vowed, how oft that night she prayed,
 To all her gods and Mahound, in despair!
 That they, by open miracle, the maid
 Would change, and give her other sex to wear.
 But all the lady's vows were ill appaid,
 And haply Heaven as well might mock the prayer;
 Night fades, and Phœbus raises from the main
 His yellow head, and lights the world again.

"On issuing from their bed when day is broken,
 The wretched Flordespina's woes augment:
 For of departing Bradamant had spoken,
 Anxious to scape from that embarrassment.
 The princess a prime jennet, as a token,
 Forced on my parting sister, when she went;
 And gilded housings, and a surcoat brave,
 Which her own hand had richly broidered, gave.

[To be read after the fourth stanza on page 213.]

"Whether I speed or no, I hold it wise,
Aye to pursue whatever gives delight.
I with no other of my plan devise,
Nor any seek to counsel me aright.
Well knowing where the suit of armor lies
My sister doffed, I thither go at night;
Her armor and her steed to boot I take,
Nor stand expecting until daylight break.

"I rode all night—Love served me as a guide—
To seek the home of beauteous Flordespine;
And there arrived, before in ocean's tide
The western sun had hid his orbit sheen.
A happy man was he who fastest hied
To tell my coming to the youthful queen;
Expecting from that lady, for his pain,
Favor and goodly guerdon to obtain.

"For Bradamant the guests mistake me all—
As you yourself but now—so much the more,
That I have both the courser and the pall
With which she left them but the day before.
Flordespine comes at little interval,
With such festivity and courteous lore,
And with a face so jocund and so gay
She could not, for her life, more joy display.

"Her beauteous arms about my neck she throws,
And fondly clasping me, my mouth she kist.
If to my inmost heart the arrow goes,
Which Love directs, may well by you be wist,
She leads me to her chamber of repose
In haste, nor suffers others to assist
In taking off my panoply of steel;
Disarming me herself from head to heel.

"Then, ordering from her store a costly vest,
 She spread it, and—as I a woman were—
 The lady me in that rich garment drest,
 And in a golden net confined my hair.
 I gravely moved my eye-balls, nor confest,
 By gesture of by look, the sex I bear.
 My voice, which might discover the deceit,
 I tuned so well that none perceived the cheat.

"Next to the hall, where dame and cavalier
 In crowds are gathered, we united go;
 Who make to us such court and goodly cheer,
 As men to queen or high-born lady show.
 Here oft I laughed at some, with secret jeer,
 Who, knowing not the sex concealed below
 My flowing robe of feminine array,
 Wooed me with wishful eyes in wanton way.

"When more advanced is now the festive night,
 And the rich board—board plenteously purveyed
 With what in season was most exquisite—
 Has been some time removed, the royal maid
 Expects not till I of myself recite
 The cause, which thither me anew conveyed:
 By her own courtesy and kindness led,
 That lady prays me to partake her bed.

"Damsels and dames withdrawn—with all the rest—
 Pages and chamberlains, when now we lay,
 One and the other, in our bed undrest,
 With kindled torches counterfeiting day;
 'Marvel not, lady,' her I thus address,
 'That I return after such short delay;
 For, haply, thou imagined that again
 Thou shouldst not see me until Heaven knows when.

“ ‘The reason I departed from thy side,
And next of my return, explained shall be.
Could I unto thy fever have applied,
By longer sojourn here, a remedy,
I in thy service would have lived and died,
Nor would have been an hour away from thee;
But seeing how my stay increased thy woe,
I, who could do not better, fixed to go.

“ ‘Into the middle of a wood profound
By chance I from the beaten pathway strayed,
Where near me plaintive cries I hear resound,
As of a woman that intreated aid.
To a lake of crystal I pursue the sound,
And there, amid the waves, a naked maid
Caught on the fish-hook of a Faun, survey,
Who would devour alive his helpless prey.

“ ‘Upon the losel, sword in hand, I ran,
And, for I could not aid in other wise,
Bereft of life that evil fisherman.
She in an instant to the water flies.
‘Me hast thou helped not vainly,’ she began,
‘And well shall be rewarded—with what prize
Thou canst demand—for know I am a nymph,
And have my dwelling in this crystal lymph.

“ ‘*And power is mine to work portentous ends;
Nature and Elements I force; thy prayer
Shape to the scope to which my strength extends,
And leave its satisfaction to my care.*
*Charmed by my song the moon from Heaven descends;
Fire can I freeze, and harden liquid air;
And I at times have stopped the sun, and stirred
This earth beneath me by a simple word.*

"Treasure I covet not, nor yet aspire
 O'er land or people to hold sovereign sway;
 Nor greater strength nor valor would acquire,
 Nor fame in every warfare bear away;
 But only to accomplish thy desire,
 Entreat the damsel she will show some way.
 Nor one nor other method I forestall;
 But to her choice refer me, all in all.

"Scarce my demand was made, before mine eye
 Beneath the lymph engulfed that lady viewed;
 Nor answered she my prayer, but, for reply,
 Me with the enchanted element bedewed;
 Which has no sooner touched my face than I,
 I know not how, am utterly transmewed;
 I see, I feel—yet doubting what I scan—
 Feel I am changed from woman into man.

"As in my former sex, so boast I still
 To thee devoted all my power and will.
 Then task them both; for ever shall they prove
 Henceforth the slaves of Flordespina's love,'
 Thus I—and gently now her hand I seize,
 To soothe her hopes, and every doubt appease.
 'Grant, Heaven,' she cried, 'if sleep such dreams can
 make,
 I still may sleep and nevermore awake.' "

[To be read after the fourth stanza on page 244.]
 From thought to thought the Sarzan's fancy flies,
 Himself removed from thence a mighty space,
 Who sits so bent, and with such downcast eyes,
 He never once looks any in the face.
 Next, after silence long, and many sighs,
 As if deep slumber had but then given place,
 His spirits he recalls, his eyelids raises,
 And on the family and landlord gazes.

Then silence broke, and with a milder air,
And visage somewhat less disturbed, applied
To him, the host, and those by-standers there,
To know, if any to a wife were tied;
And landlord and attendants, that all were,
To Sarza's moody cavalier replied:
He asked, what each conceited of his spouse,
And if he deemed her faithful to her vows.

Except mine host, those others were agreed,
That chaste and good their consorts they believed,
"Think each man as he will, but well I read,"
The landlord said, "you fondly are deceived:
Your rash replies to one conclusion lead,
That you are all of common sense bereaved;
And so too must believe this noble knight,
Unless he would persuade us black is white.

"Because, as single is that precious bird
The phoenix, and on earth there is but one,
So, in this ample world, it is averred,
One only can a woman's treason shun.
Each hopes alike to be that wight preferred,
The victor who that single palm has won.
How is it possible that what can fall
To one alone, should be the lot of all?

"Erewhile I made the same mistake as you,
And that more dames than one were virtuous thought.
Until a gentleman of Venice, who,
For my good fortune, to this inn was brought,
My ignorance by his examples true
So ably schooled, he better wisdom taught.
Valerio was the name that stranger bore,
A name I shall remember evermore.

"Of wives and mistresses the treachery
 Was known to him, with all their cunning lore.
 He, both from old and modern history,
 And from his own, was ready with such store,
 As plainly showed that none to modesty
 Could make pretension, whether rich or poor;
 And that, if one appeared of purer strain,
 'Twas that she better hid her wanton vein.

"He of his many tales, among the rest
 (Whereof a third is from my memory gone),
 So well one story in my head imprest,
 It could not be more firmly graved in stone;
 And what I thought and think, would be professed
 For that ill sex, I ween, by every one
 Who heard; and, Sir, if pleased to lend an ear,
 To their confusion you that tale shall hear."

"What could'st thou offer which could better please
 At present" (made reply the paynim knight)
 "Than sample, chosen from thine histories,
 Which hits the opinion that I hold, aright?
 That I may hear thee speak with better ease
 Sit so, that I may have thee in my sight."
 But in the following stanzas I unfold
 What to King Rodomont the landlord told.

Ladies, and all of you that ladies prize,
 Afford not, for the love of heaven, an ear
 To this, the landlord's tale, replete with lies,
 In shame and scorn of womankind; though ne'er
 Was praise or fame conveyed in that which flies
 From such a caitiff's tongue; and still we hear
 The sottish rabble all things rashly brand,
 And question most what least they understand.

Omit this canto, and, the tale untold,
My story will as clear and perfect be;
I tell it, since by Turpin it is told,
And not in malice or in rivalry:
Besides, that never did my tongue withhold
Your praises, how you are beloved by me
To you I by a thousand proofs have shown,
Vouching I am, and can but be, your own.

Let him who will, three leaves or four pass by,
Nor read a line; or let him who will read,
As little of that landlord's history,
As of a tale or fiction, make his creed.
But to my story: When his auditory
He saw were waiting for him to proceed,
And that a place was yielded him, o'erright
The cavalier, he 'gan his tale recite:

"Astolpho that the Lombard scepter swayed,
Who was King Monacho, his brother's heir,
By nature with such graces was purveyed,
Few e'er with him in beauty could compare:
Such scarce Apelles' pencil had portrayed,
Zeuxis', or worthier yet, if worthier were:
Beauteous he was, and so by all was deemed,
But far more beauteous he himself esteemed.

"He not so much rejoiced that he in height
Or grandeur was exalted o'er the rest,
And that, for riches, subjects, and for might,
Of all the neighboring kings he was the best,
As that, superior to each other wight,
His beauty was throughout the world confest.
This pleased the monarch, who the praise conferred,
As that wherein he most delighted, heard.

"Faustus Latinus, one of his array,
 Who pleased the King, a Roman cavalier,
 Hearing ofttimes Astolpho now display
 The beauties of his hand, now of his cheer,
 And, questioned by that monarch, on a day,
 If ever in his lifetime, far or near,
 He any of such beauty had espied,
 To him thus unexpectedly replied:

"Faustus to him replied: 'By what I see,
 And what I hear, is said by every one,
 Few are there that in beauty rival thee;
 And rather I those few confine to one:
 Jocundo is that one, my brother he;
 And well I ween that, saving him alone,
 Thou leavest all in beauty far behind;
 But I in him thy peer and better find.'

"Impossible Astolpho deemed the thing,
 Who hitherto had thought the palm his own;
 And such a longing seized the Lombard King
 To know that youth whose praises so were blown,
 He prest, till Faustus promised him to bring
 The brother praised by him, before his throne,
 'Though 'twould be much if thither he repaired,'
 (The courtier added) and the cause declared:

" 'Because the youth had ne'er been known to measure,
 In all his life, a single pace from Rome;
 But, on what Fortune gave him, lived at leisure,
 Contented in his own paternal dome;
 Nor had diminished nor encreased the treasure,
 Wherewith his father had endowed that home;
 And he more distant would Pavia deem
 Than Tanäis another would esteem;

“ ‘And that a greater difficulty were
To tear Jocundo from his consort; who
Was by such love united to that fair,
No other will but hers the husband knew:
Yet at his sovereign’s hest he would repair
To seek the stripling, and his utmost do.’
The suit with offers and with gifts was crowned,
Which for the youth’s refusal left no ground.

“Faustus set forth, and after few days’ ride,
Reached Rome, and his paternal mansion gained:
There with entreaties so the brother plied,
He to that journey his consent obtained;
And wrought so well (though difficult to guide)
Silent even young Jocundo’s wife remained;
He showing her what good would thence ensue,
Besides what gratitude would be her due.

“Jocundo names a time to wend his way,
And servingmen meanwhile purveys and steeds;
And a provision makes of fair array;
For beauty borrows grace from glorious weeds.
Beside him or about him, night and day,
Aye weeping, to her lord the lady reads;
‘She knows not how she ever can sustain
‘So long an absence, and not die with pain.

“ ‘For the mere thought produced such misery,
It seemed from her was ravished her heart’s core.’
Alas! my love (Jocundo cried) let be
Thy sorrows’—weeping with her evermore—
So may this journey prosper! as to thee
Will I return ere yet two months are o’er;
Nor by a day o’erpass the term prescribed,
Though me the King with half his kingdom bribed.’

"This brought his troubled consort small content:

She, 'that the period was too distant,' said,
And, 'that 'twould be a mighty wonderment,
If her, at his return, he found not dead.'
The grief which, day and night, her bosom rent,
Was such, that lady neither slept nor fed:
So that for pity oft the youth repented
He to his brother's wishes had consented.

"She from her neck unloosed a costly chain
That a gemmed cross and holy relics bore;
Which one, a pilgrim of Bohemia's reign,
Had gathered upon many a distant shore;
Him did her sire in sickness entertain,
Returning from Jerusalem of yore;
And hence was made that dying pilgrim's heir:
This she undoes, and gives her lord to wear;

"And round his neck entreats him, for her sake,
That chain in memory of herself to wind:
Her gift the husband is well pleased to take;
Not that a token needs his love to bind:
For neither time, nor absence, e'er will shake,
Nor whatsoever fortune is behind,
Her memory, which, rooted fast and deep,
He still has kept, and after death will keep.

"The night before that morning streaked the sky,
Fixt for his journey, to his sore dismay,
Her husband deemed that in his arms would die
The wife from whom he was to wend his way.
She slumbered not: to her a last goodbye
He bade, while yet it lacked an hour of day,
Mounted his nag, and on his journey sped;
While his afflicted spouse returned to bed.

"Jocundo was not two miles on his road,
When he that jeweled cross recalled to mind;
Which he beneath his pillow had bestowed,
And through forgetfulness had left behind.
'Alas!' (the youth bethought him) 'in what mode
Shall I excuse for my omission find,
So that from this my consort shall not deem
I little her unbounded love esteem?"

"He pondered an excuse; then weened 'twould be
Of little value, if it were exprest
By page or other—save his embassy
He did himself; his brother he address;
'Now to Baccano ride you leisurely,
And there at the first inn set up your rest;
For I must back to Rome without delay;
But trust to overtake you by the way.

" 'No other but myself my need could do.
Doubt not but I shall speedily be back.'
—No servant took he, but, with an adieu,
Jocundo, at a trot, wheeled round his hack,
And when that cavalier the stream was through,
The rising sun 'gan chase the dusky rack.
At home he lighted, sought his bed, and found
The consort he had quitted sleeping sound.

"He, without saying aught, the curtains drew,
And, what he least believed, within espied:
For he beneath the quilt, his consort true,
And chaste, saw sleeping at a stripling's side.
Forthwith Jocundo that adulterer knew,
By practise, of his features certified,
In that he was a footboy in his train,
Nourished by him, and come of humble strain.

"To imagine his distress and wonderment,
 And warrant it, that other may believe,
 Is better than to make the experiment,
 And, like this wretch, the cruel proof receive:
 By anger stirred, it was his first intent
 To draw his sword, and both of life bereave;
 But love, which spite himself, he entertained
 For that ungrateful woman, him restrained.

"You see if like a vassal he obeyed
 This ribald Love, who left him not the force
 To wake her, lest to know her guilt surveyed,
 Should in his consort's bosom move remorse.
 As best he could, he forth in silence made,
 The stair descended, and regained his horse.
 Goaded by Love, he goads his steed again,
 And ere they reach their inn rejoins his train.

"His change of mien to all was manifest;
 All saw his heart was heavy; yet not one,
 Mid these, in any sort, the reason guessed,
 Nor read the secret woe which caused his moan;
 All thought he had to Rome his steps address,
 Who to the town, surnamed of horns, had gone.
 That Love has caused the mischief all surmise,
 Though none of them conjectures in what wise.

"His brother weened he was in grief immersed
 For his deserted wife: he, on his side,
 For other reason, inly chafed and cursed,
 —That she was but too well accompanied.
 Meanwhile, with swelling lips and forehead pursed,
 The ground that melancholy stripling eyed.
 Faustus, who vainly would apply relief,
 Ill cheered him, witless what had caused his grief.

“He for his sore an evil salve had found,
And, where he should relieve, increased his woes;
Who, with the mention of his wife, that wound
Inflamed and opened, which he sought to close.
He rests not night nor day, in sorrow drowned;
His appetite is gone, with his repose,
Ne’er to return; and (whilom of such fame)
His lovely visage seems no more the same.

“His eye-balls seem deep-buried in his head,
His nose seems grown—his cheeks are pined so sore—
Nor even remains (his beauty so is fled)
Enough to warrant what he was before.
Such fever burns him, of his sorrow bred,
He halts on Arbia’s and on Arno’s shore;
And, if a charm is left, ’tis faded soon,
And withered like a rosebud plucked at noon.

“Besides that Faustus sorrowed to descry
Him so bested; worse cause for sorrowing
Was to that courtier to appear to lie
Before Astolpho; he was pledged to bring
One that was fairest deemed in every eye,
Who must appear the foulest to that King;
Yet he continued on his way to wend,
And brought him to Pavia in the end.

“Not that forthwith he lets the youth be seen,
Lest him the King of little wit arraign;
He first by his dispatches lets him ween,
That thither he Jocundo brings with pain:
Saying, that of his beauteous air and mien
Some secret cause of grief had been the bane,
Accompanied by a distemper sore:
So that he seemed not what he was before.

"Glad was the monarch, of his coming taught,
 As of a friend's arrival he could be;
 Since in the universal world was naught,
 That he so much desired as him to see:
 Nor was the Lombard King displeased in aught
 To mark his guest's inferiority;
 Though, but for his misfortune, it was clear,
 He his superior would have been or peer.

"Lodged by him in his palace, every day
 And every hour, the stranger youth he sees,
 Studious to honor him, and bids purvey
 Store of provision for his better ease.
 While still his thoughts to his ill consort stray,
 Jocundo languishes; nor pastimes please
 That melancholy man; nor music's strain
 One jot diminishes his ceaseless pain.

"Above his chambers, on the upper floor,
 Nearest the roof, there was an ancient hall:
 Thither, in solitary mood, (for sore
 Pastime and company the stripling galls),
 He aye betakes himself; while evermore
 Sad thoughts some newer cause of grief recall.
 He here (who would believe the story?) found
 A remedy unhop'd, which made him sound.

"At that hall's farther end, more feebly lighted,
 (For windows ever closed shut out the day)
 Where one wall with another ill united,
 He, through the chink, beheld a brighter ray:
 There laid his eye, and saw, what he had slighted
 As hard to credit, were it but hearsay:
 He hears it not, but this himself describes;
 Yet hardly can believe his very eyes.

“He of the Queen’s apartment here has sight,
Her choicest and her priviest chamber, where
Was never introduced whatever wight,
Save he most faithful was esteemed: he there,
As he was peeping, saw an uncouth fight;
A dwarf was wrestling with the royal fair;
And such that champion’s skill, though undergrown,
He in the strife his opposite had thrown.

“As in a dream, Jocundo stood, beside
Himself, awhile of sober sense bereaved;
Nor, but when of the matter certified,
And sure it was no dream, his sight believed.
‘A scorned and crooked monster,’ (then he cried)
‘Is, as her conqueror, by a dame received,
Wife of the comeliest, of the curtiest wight,
And greatest monarch; Oh! what appetite!’

“And he the consort to whom he was wed,
Her he most used to blame, recalled to mind
And, for the stripling taken to her bed,
To deem the dame less culpable inclined:
Less of herself than sex the fault he read,
Which to one man could never be confined;
And thought, if in one taint all women shared
At least his had not with a monster paired.

“To the same place Jocundo made return,
At the same hour, upon the following day;
And, putting on the King the self-same scorn,
Again beheld that dwarf and dame at play:
And so upon the next and following morn;
For—to conclude—they made no holiday:
While she (what most Jocundo’s wonder moved)
The pigmy for his little love reproved.

"One day, amid the rest, the youth surveyed
 The dame disordered and opprest with gloom,
 Having twice summoned, by her waiting-maid,
 The favored dwarf, who yet delayed to come;
 A third time by the lady sent, she said;
 'Engaged at play, Madonna, is the groom,
 Nor, lest he lose a doit, his paltry stake,
 Will that discourteous churl his game forsake.'

"At such strange spectacle, the Roman knight
 Cleared up his brow, his visage and his eyes;
 He jocund, as in name, became in sprite,
 And changed his tears for smiles: with altered guise,
 He waxes ruddy, gay, and plump in plight,
 And seems like cherubim of Paradise.
 So that such change with wonderment all see,
 Brother and king, and royal family.

"If from the youth Astolpho wished to know
 From whence this sudden light of comfort came,
 No less Jocundo thus desired to show,
 And to the King such injury proclaim:
 But willed that like himself he should forego
 Revenge upon the author of that shame:
 Hence, that he might discern her guilt, yet spare,
 He made him on the Agnus Dei swear.

"He made him swear that he, for nothing said,
 Or seen, which might to him displeasing be,
 (Though he, in what he should discover, read
 An outrage offered to his majesty,)
 Would, now or ever, venge him on this head:
 Moreover him he bound to secrecy:
 That the ill doer ne'er, through deed or word,
 Might guess his injured King that case had heard.

“The monarch, who to everything beside
Could better have given credit, freely swore:
To him the cause Jocundo signified,
Why he had many days lamented sore;
‘Because he had his evil wife espied
In the embraces of a serjeant poor;
And vowed he should in fine have died of grief
If he for longer time had lacked relief.

“‘But that within his highness’ palace,’ said,
‘He had witnessed what had much appeased his woe;
For, if foul shame had fallen upon his head,
At least he was not single,’ saying so,
He to that chink the Lombard monarch led,
Who spied the mannikin of hideous show,
Whose charms had taught his faithful wife to yield,
And now was plowing in another’s field.

“You may believe he shameless deemed that act,
Without my swearing it; he, at the sight,
It seemed, would go distraught—with fury racked,
He against every wall his head would smite—
Would cry aloud—would break the solemn pact,
Yet kept perforce the promise he had plight;
And gulped his anger down and bitter scorn:
Since on the holy wafer he had sworn.

“Then to Jocundo; ‘What remains to me
To do in this misfortune, brother, speak;
Since vengeance with some noted cruelty
Thou wilt not let me on the sinners wreak,’
Jocundo answered, ‘Let these ingrates be;
And try we if all women are as weak;
And if the wives of others can be won
To do what others by our own have done.

“ ‘Both fair and youthful, measured by this scale,
 Not easily our equals shall we find;
 What woman but to us shall strike her sail,
 If even to the ugly these are kind?
 At least, if neither youth nor grace avail,
 The money may, with which our bags are lined;
 Nor will I that we homeward more return,
 Ere the chief spoils we from a thousand earn.

“ ‘Long absence, seeing many a distant part,
 Converse with different women, oft allay,
 As it would seem, the troubles of a heart,
 Whereof Love’s angry passions make their prey.’
 The King is pleased to hear the youth impart
 This counsel, nor his journey will delay:
 Thence on their road, with but two squires beside,
 He and the Roman knight together ride.

“Disguised they go through France and Italy,
 They Flanders next and England scower, and where
 A woman they of lovely visage spy,
 Aye find the dame compliant with their prayer.
 They upon some bestow what others buy,
 And oft replaced their squandered treasures are.
 Our travelers to the wives of many sued,
 And by as many other dames were wooed.

“By solid proof those comrades ascertain,
 Here tarrying for a month, and there for two,
 That their own wives are of no other vein
 Than those of others, and as chaste and true.
 After some season, wearied are the twain
 With ever running after something new:
 For, without risk of death, thus evermore
 The intruders ill could enter other’s door.

“—’Twere best to find a girl whose natural bent
And face to both of us should pleasing be;
A girl that us in common might content,
Nor we in her find cause for jealousy;
And wherefore wouldst thou that I should lament
More than with other, to go halves with thee?”
Exclaimed Astolpho, ‘well I know is none,
Of all the female sex, content with one.

“ ‘One damsel that in naught shall us constrain,
—Then only, when disposed to please the fair—
Will we in peace and pleasure entertain,
Nor we, about her, have dispute or care.
Nor deem I she with reason could complain:
For if two fell to every other’s share,
Better than one might she keep faith with two;
Nor haply we such frequent discord view.’

“Much seems the King’s proposal to content
The Roman youth; and thus it is, the twain
To execute Astolpho’s project bent,
Journey by many a hill and many a plain;
And find at last, well fitting their intent,
The daughter of a publican of Spain,
Of presence and of manners framed to win;
Whose father at Valencia kept his inn.

“As yet, upon the bloom of spring, the maid
Was a fresh flower that scarce began to blow:
Her sire with many children was o’erlaid
And was to poverty a mortal foe,
Hence ’tis an easy matter to persuade
Mine host his buxom daughter to forego,
And let them where they will the damsel bear
In that to treat her well the travelers swear.

"They take the damsel, and in friendship prove
 The amorous warfare of alternate love.
 She, well content, no fault in either sees,
 Nor finds it irksome both in turn to please.
 The Spanish region thence they traversed o'er
 And passed the realms of Syphax to explore.
 They to Zattiva come upon the day
 That from Valencia they had bent their way.

"The travelers from their inn to street and square
 And places, public and divine, resort;
 Who, wheresoever they had made repair,
 Themselves were so accustomed to disport,
 The girl is with the valets left in care,
 Who make the beds, and wearied hackneys sort:
 While others in the hostel-kitchen dight
 The meal against their lords' return at night.

"As groom, a stripling in the hostel plied,
 Who in the other landlord's house had been:
 He, from her childhood at the damsel's side,
 Had joyed her love: they, without change of mien,
 On meeting, closely one another eyed,
 Since either apprehended to be seen:
 But when alone—now left together—raised
 Their eyelids and on one another gazed.

"The stripling asked her, 'whitherward they sped,
 And of the two which claimed her as his right;'
 This, point by point, to him Flammetta read:
 Flammetta she, the Greek that boy was hight.
 'When I had hoped the time was coming,' said
 The Greek—'that I should live with thee, my light,
 Flammetta, thou, alas! art lost to me,
 Nor know I if I more thy face shall see.

“ ‘I to the bitter dregs the cup must drain
Of promised sweets; since thou art others’ prey.
’Twas my design, having with mickle pain
And labor sore, some money put away,
Which I had hoarded out of frequent gain
From parting guests, and from my yearly pay,
To seek again Valencia, and demand
Thee from thy sire in lawful wedlock’s band.’

“The damsel shrugs her shoulders and complains;
And ‘that he is too late’ is her reply.
The Greek laments and sobs, and partly feigns:
‘Wilt thou,’ he answered her, ‘thus let me die?
Let me, at least, exhale my amorous pains!
Let me, but once, in thine embraces lie!
For every moment in thy presence spent,
Ere thou depart, will make me die content.’

“To him the damsel, full of pity, cries,
‘Believe, I covet this no less than thee;
But here, surrounded by so many eyes,
Is neither time nor opportunity.’
‘I feel assured,’ to her that youth replies,
‘Were I beloved by you, as you by me,
This very night you would find out a place
Wherein to solace us some little space.’

“She bade him come—when she awhile had thought—
When he believed that all asleep were laid;
And how by him her chamber should be sought,
And how he should return, at full, displayed.
The cautious stripling did as he was taught,
And, when he found all silent, thither made:
He pushed, till it gave way, the chamber-door,
And, upon tiptoes, softly paced the floor.

A forward step, and wide his hands are spread
 On either side to find the expected bed.
 He reached the foot, and made his artful way
 Beneath the covering where Flammetta lay.
 Soon as the Greek, the night's short blessing o'er,
 Returning seeks the way he came before,
 And Phœbus' beams to light the east begin,
 Flammetta, rising, lets the pages in.

"Now with his friend the King prepares to jest.
 'Brother,' he cries, 'it fits you sure to rest.
 Some leisure must recruit your weary sprite,
 Tired with the watching of so long a night.'
 Jocundo then replies in taunting vein:
 'Repose be yours, since you the toil sustain.
 You use my words—fair rest betide your Grace,
 As to the huntsman wearied in the chase.'

" 'I,' said the King, 'I would in truth have tried
 The lover's suit, but found my suit denied.'
 Again Jocundo thus; 'Your slave am I;
 'Tis yours to break, or with our terms comply.
 But such dispute or taunts there needed none,
 You might have chid my love, and claimed your own.'
 At last they call the trembling girl to clear
 The doubtful truth. The girl, with conscious fear,

"Steps trembling forth, commanded to reveal
 What each alike seemed earnest to conceal.
 'Declare,' with stern regard the monarch cried,
 'And fear not evil shall thyself betide,
 Which of us two so long in love's delight
 Usurped with thee the pleasures of the night.'
 Impatient both await the girl's reply,
 And hope her words will fix on one the lie.

"Flammetta, lowly prostrate on the ground,
Of life despairing since her fault was found,
Implored forgiveness, and with tears confessed
That, urged by love, which long had swayed her
Some pity on a faithful swain to take, [breast,
Who years had sighed, and sighed but for her sake,
She hoped one error would alike betray
Each noble lover that beside her lay.

"Gazing on one another, with surprise,
The monarch and Jocundo are confused;
Nor even to have heard a case surmise
Of two that ever thus had been abused:
Then laughed so, that they sate with winking eyes,
And open mouth, and lungs which breath refused;
And, wearied with the mirth her tale had bred,
Fell backwards, both, exhausted on the bed.

"When they had laughed so loud a laugh, the dew
Stood in their eyes, and each with aching breast
Remained, the pair exclaimed: 'What shall we do
In order not to be a woman's jest?
Since we, with all our heed, between us two,
Could not preserve the one by us possest,
A husband, furnished with more eyes than hair,
Perforce must be betrayed with all his care.

"'A thousand, beauteous all, have we found kind,
Nor one of those so many has stood fast.
If tried, all women we by proof should find
Like these; but be the experiment our last.
Then we may deem our own not worse inclined
Than are the wives of others, and as chaste:
And if like others we our own discern,
I hold it best that we to them return.'

"When they have come to this resolve, they, through
 Flammetta, call the youth into their bower;
 And with the girl her leman, in the view
 Of many, gift, and add a fitting dower.
 They mount, and to the east their way pursue,
 Accustomed westward hitherto to scower;
 To their deserted wives again repair,
 Nor of their after-deeds take further care."

Here paused mine host; to whom on every side
 His audience had with careful heed attended.
 Rodomont listened, nor a word replied,
 Until the landlord's story was suspended.
 Then, "Fully I believe," that paynim cried,
 "The tale of women's frauds would ne'er be ended;
 Nor could that man in any volume note
 The thousandth part, who would their treasons quote."

Of sounder judgment, 'mid that company,
 There was an elder, one more wise and bold;
 That undefended so the sex to see
 Was inly wroth, and could no longer hold:
 To the relater of that history
 He turned; and, "Many things we have been told,"
 Exclaimed that ancient, "wherein truth is none,
 And of such matters is thy fable one.

"Him I believe not, that told this to you,
 Though in all else he gospel-truths expresst;
 As less by his experience, than untrue
 Conceit respecting women prepossest.
 The malice which he bears to one or two,
 Makes him unjustly hate and blame the rest.
 But you shall hear him, if his wrath o'erblow,
 Yet greater praise than blame on these bestow.

"And he a larger field for speaking well
Will find, than blaming womankind withal;
And of a hundred worthy fame may tell,
For one whose evil deeds for censure call.
He should exalt the many that excel,
Culled from the multitude, not rail at all.
If otherwise your friend Valerio said,
He was by wrath, and not by reason, led.

"Say, which of you, in nuptial union tied,
Has never from his consort stepped aside,
And, when occasion called, refused to taste
Forbidden pleasures, or his substance waste
On alien charms; while save the abandoned crew
Of hireling loves, no women men pursue?
Is there a husband will not leave his home,
Though fair his wife, for other joys to roam?

"Let smiling love, from wife or maiden, try
With gifts to bend, what virtue would deny?
To please the sex what lover will refuse,
Or stop his ear when charming woman sues?
And oft, I fear, from some injurious cause,
The fair are led to infringe the nuptial laws.
Perchance, their beauty viewed with fated eye,
They see their lords to foreign beauties fly.

"Love claims return—what we to others give
We claim in equal measure to receive.
Could I a statute frame, each guilty wife,
In sinful commerce found, should yield her life,
Unless she clearly to the world could prove
Her consort had indulged unlawful love;
But, this once proved, the dame absolved should be,
From courts and from her lord's resentment free.

"For Christ has taught: 'To others never do
That which yourselves could wish not done to you.'
Yet still incontinence, if this we call
Weak woman's crime, is not the crime of all.
But even in this our sex's guilt is most,
Since not a man of chastity can boast.
All crimes are his, and crimes but rarely known
To woman's sex, familiar to our own."

So reasoning, that just elder and sincere,
With ready instances, supports his creed;
Showing there many women are who ne'er
Sinned against chastity, in word or deed:
But him with impious visage and severe
The paynim scared, ill pleased the truth to read.
So that, through fear, he further speech forbore,
But changed not therefore aught his former lore.

[To be read after the fourth stanza on page 357.]

Conversing with his courteous host, the peer
Sate at the board, and oft and often prayed,
That without more delay the cavalier
Would keep the promise he whilere had made;
And marking, ever and anon, his cheer,
Observes his heart with some deep woe downweighed.
For not a moment 'mid their converse slips,
But that a burning sigh is on his lips.

Oft with desire was good Rinaldo stung
To ask that sorrow's cause, and the request
Was almost on the gentle warrior's tongue,
And there by courteous modesty repress.
Now at their banquet's close a youth, among
The menial crew, on whom that charge did rest,
Placed a gold cup before the paladin,
Filled full of gems without, of wine within.

The host then somedeal smiling, from the board
Looked up at Aymon's son; but who this while
Well marked him, as he eyed Mount Alban's lord,
Had deemed him more disposed to weep than smile.
"So oft reminded to maintain my word,
'Tis time meseems," said he, that owned the pile,
"To shew the touchstone for a woman's love,
Which needs to wedded man must welcome prove.

"Ne'er, in my judgment, should the married dame
Be from espial by her lord released.
Thus shall he know if honor or if blame
His portion is; if he is man or beast.
The weight of horns, though coupled with such shame,
Is of all burdens upon earth the least.
While well-nigh all behold his antlers spread,
He feels them not who has them on his head.

"If certain of thy wife's fidelity,
Thou hast more ground to prize and hold her dear
Than one whose wife is evil known to be,
Or husband that is still in doubt and fear.
Full many husbands live in jealousy,
And groundlessly, of women chaste and clear.
On many women many men rely
Meanwhile, who bear their branching antlers high.

"If thou wouldst be assured thy wife is true
(As sure methinks thou thinkest and must think)
For it is hard that notion to undo,
Unless thy trust before sure tokens sink—
No hearsay matter this—thyself shalt view
The truth, if thou in this fair vessel drink,
Placed solely on the supper-board, that thou
Mayest see the marvel promised thee but now.

"Drink, and a mighty marvel shall be seen;
 For if thou wearest Cornwall's lofty crest,
 No drop of wine shall pass thy lips between,
 And all the draught be spilt upon thy breast.
 If faithful is thy wife, thou shalt drink clean.
 And now—to try thy fortune—to the test!"
 He said, and with fixed eyes the sign explored;
 If on his breast the wine Rinaldo poured.

Rinaldo was nigh moved the cup to raise,
 And seek what he would haply wish unsought;
 Forward he reached his hand and took the vase,
 About to prove his fortune in the draught.
 Then of the passing peril of the case,
 Before it touched his lips, the warrior thought.
 But let me, sir, repose myself, and I
 Will then relate the Paladin's reply.

What shall of high and beauteous dames be said?
 Who (from their lover's worth and charms secure)
 Against long service, I behold, more staid,
 More motionless, than marble shafts, endure:
 Then Avarice comes, who so her spells hath laid,
 I see them stoop directly to her lure.
 Who could believe?—unloving, in a day
 They fall some elder's, fall some monster's prey.

Fain would he think awhile, of whom I speak,
 (As said) ere to his lips the vase he bore;
 He thought; then thus: "When finding what we seek
 Displease us, this 'tis folly to explore.
 My wife's a woman; every woman's weak.
 Then let me hold the faith I held before.
 Faith still has brought, and yet contentment brings.
 From proof itself what better profit springs?

"From this small good, much evil I foresee:
For tempting God moves sometimes his disdain.
I know not if it wise or foolish be,
But to know more than needs, I am not fain.
Now put away the enchanted cup from me;
I neither will, nor would, the goblet drain;
Which is with Heaven's command as much at strife,
As Adam's deed who robbed the tree of life.

"For as our sire who tasted of that tree,
And God's own word, by eating, disobeyed,
Fell into sorrow from felicity,
And was by misery evermore o'erlaid;
The husband so, that all would know and see,
Whatever by his wife is done and said,
Passes from happiness to grief and pain,
Nor ever can uplift his head again."

Meanwhile the good Rinaldo saying so,
And pushing from himself the cup abhorred,
Beheld of tears a plenteous fountain flow
From the full eyes of that fair mansion's lord;
Who cried, now having somewhat calmed his woe,
"Accursed be he, persuaded by whose word,
Alas! I of the fortune made assay,
Whereby my cherished wife was reft away!

"Wherefore ten years ago wast thou not known,
So that I counseled might have been of thee?
Before the sorrows and the grief begun,
That have nigh quenched my eyes; but raised shall be
The curtain from the scene, that thou upon
My pain may'st look, and may'st lament with me;
And I to thee of mine unheard-of woe
The argument and very head will show.

"Above, was left a neighboring city, pent
 Within a limpid stream that forms a lake;
 Which widens, and wherein Po finds a vent.
 Their way the waters from Benacus take.
 Built was the city, when to ruin went
 Walls founded by the Agenorean snake.
 Here me of gentle line my mother bore,
 But of small means, in humble home and poor.

"If Fortune's care I was not, who denied
 To me upon my birth a wealthy boon,
 Nature that want with graceful form supplied;
 So that in beauty rival had I none.
 Enamored of me in youth's early tide
 Erewhile was dame and damsel more than one:
 For I with beauty coupled winning ways:
 Though it becomes not man himself to praise.

"A sage within our city dwelled, a wight,
 Beyond belief, in every science great;
 Who, when he closed his eyes on Phœbus' light,
 Numbered one hundred years, one score and eight.
 A savage life he led and out of sight,
 Until impelled by love, the senior late
 By dint of gifts obtained a matron fair,
 Who secretly to him a daughter bare;

"And to prevent the child from being won,
 As was erewhile the mother, that for gain
 Bartered her chastity, whose worth alone
 Excels what gold earth's ample veins contain,
 With her he from the ways of man is gone,
 And where he spies the loneliest place, his train
 Of demons forces, in enchantment skilled.
 This dome so spacious, fair, and rich, to build.

“By ancient and chaste dames he there made rear
This daughter, that in sovereign beauty grew;
Nor suffered her to see or even hear
A man beside himself; and, for her view,
—Lest lights should lack, whereby her course to steer—
The senior every modest lady, who
E'er on unlawful love the barrier shut,
Made limn in picture, or in sculpture cut.

“Nor he alone those virtuous dames, who, sage
And chaste, had so adorned antiquity,
Whose fame, preserved by the historic page,
Is never doomed its dying day to see;
But those as well that will in future age
Everywhere beautify fair Italy,
Made fashion in their well-known form and mien;
As eight that round this fount by thee are seen.

“What time the damsel ripe for husband shows,
So that the fruit may now be gathered, I
(Did chance or my misfortune so dispose?)
Am worthiest found; and those broad lands that lie
Without the walls which that fair town enclose,
—The fishy flat no less than upland dry—
Extending twenty miles about that water,
He gives me for a dowry, with his daughter.

“She was so mannered, was so fair of hue,
None could desire she other gifts should bring;
So well to broider was she taught, and sew,
Minerva knew not better; did she sing.
Or play, or walk, to those that hear and view,
She seems a heavenly, and no mortal thing;
And in the liberal arts was skilled as well
As her own sire, or scarce behind him fell.

"With genius high and beauty no less bright,
Which might have served the very stones to move,
Such love, such sweetness did the maid unite,
Thinking thereof meseems my heart is clove.
She had no greater pleasure or delight
Than being with me, did I rest or rove.
'Twas long ere we had any strife; in fine
We quarreled; and the fault, alas! was mine.

"Five years my consort's father had been dead,
Since to the yoke I stooped, and pledged my vow;
When in short time (the manner shall be said)
Began the sorrows that I feel even now.
While me with all his pinions overspread
Love of the dame, whose praises thus I blow,
A noble townswoman with love of me
Was smit; more sorely smitten none could be.

"She, in all magic versed, was of such skill
As never was enchantress; by her say
Moved solid earth, and made the sun stand still,
Illumined gloomy night and darkened day:
Yet never could she work upon my will,
The anguish of her amorous wound to allay
With salve I could not give, except with scathe
Of her to whom erewhile I pledged my faith.

"Not because she right gentle was and bright,
Nor because I believed her love so true,
Nor for large gift, nor promise often plight,
Nor yet because she never ceased to sue,
Could she from me obtain one spark of light
From that first flame my gentle consort blew:
So mates and masters every will in me
The knowledge of my wife's fidelity.

"I in the hope, belief, and certitude
My wife to me was faithful evermore,
Should with contempt the beauty have eschewed
Of that famed daughter which fair Leda bore;
And all the wit and wealth wherewith was wooed
The illustrious shepherd upon Ida hoar.
But no repulse withal with her avails,
Who me, for ever at my side, assails.

"One day that me beyond my palace sees
That weird enchantress, who Melissa hight,
And where she can discourse with me at ease,
She finds a way whereby my peace to blight;
And, goading me with evil jealousies,
The faith I nursed at heart she puts to flight.
She 'gan commending my intent to be
Faithful to her who faithful was to me.

" 'But that she faithful is, ye cannot say,
Save of her faith ye have assurance true;
If she fails not withal, where fail she may,
She faithful, modest may be deemed by you:
But is she never from your side away,
Is not permitted other man to view,
How does this boldness come, that you would be
The warrant of her untried modesty?

" 'Go forth awhile; go forth from home alone;
And be the bruit in town and village spread
That she remains behind, and you are gone;
Let lovers and let couriers have their head:
If, unpersuaded still by prayer and boon,
She does no outrage to the marriage bed,
Though doing so she deem herself unseen,
Then faithful you the dame may justly ween.'

"I with such words and such-like words was plied,
 Till so on me the shrewd enchantress wrought,
 I wished to see my consort's virtue tried.
 By certain proof, and to the touchstone brought.
 'Now grant we,' I to that witch-lady cried,
 'She prove what cannot by myself be thought,
 How by some certain token can I read
 If she will merit punishment or meed?"

" 'A drinking-cup will I for that assay
 Give you,' she said, 'of virtue strange and rare:
 Such was for Arthur made by Morgue the fay,
 To make him of Genevra's fault aware.
 The chaste wife's lord thereof may drink; but they
 Drink not, whose wedded partners wanton are:
 For, when they would the cordial beverage sup,
 Into their bosom overflows the cup.

" 'Before departing, you the test shall try,
 And, to my thinking, now shall you drink clean;
 For clean as yet I think your consort, I:
 The event however shall by you be seen.
 Yet will I warrant not your bosom dry,
 Should you repeat the proof; for if, between
 The cup and lip, the liquor be not shed,
 You are the happiest wight that ever wed.'

"The offer I accept, the vase to me
 Is given, and trial made with full success;
 For hitherto (as hoped) confirmed I see
 My gentle consort's worth and faithfulness.
 'Leave her awhile,' Melissa said, 'and be
 A month or twain a truant, more or less:
 Then homeward wend; again the goblet fill;
 And prove if you the beverage drink or spill.'

"I thought it hard to leave my consort's side;
Not as so much about her truth in pain,
As that I could not for two days abide,
Nay, not an hour without her could remain.
'You in another way,' Melissa cried,
'Guided by me, the truth shall ascertain;
Voice, vesture shall you change; and to her sight
Present yourself, disguised like other wight.'

"Sir, a fair city nigh at hand defends
Twixt fierce and threatening horns the foaming Po;
Whose jurisdiction to the shore extends,
Where the sea's briny waters come and go:
This yields in ancientry, but well contends
With neighboring towns in rich and gorgeous show:
A Trojan remnant its foundations placed,
Which scaped from Attila's destructive waste.

"A rich, a youthful, and a handsome knight
Bridles this city with his sovereign sway;
Who, following a lost falcon in its flight,
Entering by chance my dwelling on a day,
Beheld my wife, who pleased him so at sight,
He bore her impress in his heart away;
Nor ceased to practise on her, with intent
To incline the matron to his evil bent.

"So often she repels the cavalier,
That finally his courtship is foregone;
But her fair image graved by Love will ne'er
Be razed from memory; me Melissa won
(So well she soothed and flattered) of that peer
The face and figure to the sight to don;
And changed me—nor well how can I declare—
In voice and visage and in eyes and hair.

"I, having to my lady made a show
 As eastward bound and gone,—like him that wooed
 Her rich and youthful lover, altered so,
 His semblance, walk, voice, vest in me are viewed,
 Homeward, attended by Melissa, go,
 Into a page upon her side transmewed:
 Who the most costly jewels with her bore
 E'er brought from Ind, or Erithræan shore.

"I enter safely, that my palace knew,
 And with me wends Melissa; and there I
 So wholly at her ease Madonna view,
 No woman or attendant squire is by.
 To her with suppliant prayer forthwith I sue,
 And next those goads to evil deed apply;
 Show emerald, ruby, diamond, that might serve
 To make the firmest heart from honor swerve;

"And I declare to her the gift is small
 To that which she may hope to make her own;
 Then of the vantage speak, that from his hall
 Her husband at the present time is gone;
 And I how long it was to her recall,
 Since, as she knew, to her my love was shown;
 And that my loving with such faith, in the end
 Might worthily to some reward pretend.

"At first she was somedeal disturbed; became
 Like scarlet; nor would listen to my say;
 But seeing those bright jewels flash like flame,
 Her stubborn heart was softened, and gave way:
 And in brief speech and feeble said the dame
 What to remember takes my life away:
 She with my wishes said she would comply,
 'If sure to be unseen of watchful eye.'

"Me my wife's words like poisoned weapon thrill,
And pierce my suffering spirit through and through:
Through bones and veins there went a deadly chill;
My tongue clave to my throat. The witch withdrew
With that the magic mantle, and at will
Transformed me to mine ancient shape anew,
Bethink thee of what hue my wife became,
Taken by me in such notorious shame!

"Of deadly hue we both of us remain;
We both stand silent; both with downcast eye
So feeble is my tongue, that I with pain,
So faint my voice, that I with pain can cry;
'Thou wouldst betray me then, O wife, for gain,
If there was one that would my honor buy!'
She naught replies; nor save by tears she speaks,
Which furrow, as they fall, her woful cheeks.

"Shame stings her sore, but yet in sorer wise
Wrath at the outrage I to her had done;
And so without restraint it mutiplies,
And into rage and cruel hate is run,
To fly from me forthwith does she devise;
And, what time from his car dismounts the sun,
Runs to the shore, abroad her pinnace wends,
And all that night the stream in haste descends;

"And she at morn presents herself before
Him that had loved her once, the cavalier,
Whose semblance and whose borrowed face I wore
When, to my shame, I tempted her whilere.
To him that loved, and loves her evermore,
Her coming, it may be believed, is dear.
From thence she bade me never entertain
The hope she'd love me, or be mine again.

"Alas! with him she dwells in mickle glee
Even from that day, and makes of me a jest;
And of that evil which I brought on me
I languish yet, and find no place of rest.
Justly this growing ill my death will be,
Of little remnant now of life possest.
I well believe I in a year had died,
But that a single comfort aid supplied.

"That comfort was; of all that harbored were
Here for ten years (for still to every guest
Beneath my roof I bade the vessel bear)
Was none but with the wine had bathed his breast.
To have so many comrades in my care,
Some little soothes the griefs that so molest.
Thou only of so many hast been wise,
Who wouldst forbear the perilous emprise.

"My wish, o'erpassing every fitting bound,
To know what husband of his wife should know,
Is cause, by me no quiet will be found,
Whether my death be speedy or be slow.
Thereat at first Melissa joys; but drowned
Forthwith is her light mirth; for of my woe
Esteeming her the cause, that dame so sore
I hated, I would not behold her more.

"Impatient to be treated with disdain
By me—of her more loved than life, she said—
Where she forthwith as mistress to remain
Had hoped, when thence the other was conveyed—
Not to behold such present cause of pain,
Her own departure little she delayed;
And went so far away, no further word
By me was ever of that woman heard."

His tale the mournful cavalier so taught;
And when he now had closed his history,
With pity touched, somewhere immersed in thought
Rinaldo mused, and after made reply:
"Right ill advice to thee Melissa brought,
Who moved thee thus to anger wasps; and I
Perceive in thee small wisdom, that wouldst sound
A thing which thou wouldst gladly not have found.

"If she, thy wife, by avarice was inclined
To break her faith and be to thee untrue,
Muse not: nor first nor last of womankind,
She, worsted, from such cruel war withdrew;
And by a meaner bribe yet firmer mind
Is even tempted fouler deed to do.
Of men, of how many we hear, that sold
Their patrons and their friends for sordid gold?

"With such fierce arms thou ill didst her assail,
If to behold a brave defense thou sought.
Knowst thou not, against gold of no avail
Is stone, or steel to hardest temper wrought?
Meseems that thou in tempting her didst fail
More than herself, that was so quickly caught.
I know not, had she tempted thee as much,
If thou thyself hadst better stood the touch."

Here ends Rinaldo, and—the parley done—
Rises and to his rest desires to go:
"Awhile will he repose; and then be gone,
An hour or two before the daylight show."
But little time has Aymon's warlike son;
Nor idly will that little time bestow.
To him the mansion's master made reply,
He in his house might at his pleasure lie.

[To be read after the fifth stanza on page 358.]

Mount Alban's martial lord (as it befell,
That thought moved thought, which others moved
again)

In memory chances on the knight to dwell,
That him at supper late did entertain;
That, through this city's cause, the truth to tell,
Hath reason evermore to be in pain;
And of a magic vessel him bethinks
Which shows his consort's guilt to him that drinks;

And him bethinks therewith of what the knight
Related; how of all that he had tried,
Who of his goblet drank, there was no wight
But spilled the wine he to his lips would guide.
Now he repents him; now, " 'Tis my delight,"
Mutters, "that I the proof would not abide.
Succeeding, I should prove but what I thought;
And not succeeding, to what pass am brought!

"This my belief I deem a certainty;
And faith could have but small increase in me.
So, if I this should by the touchstone try,
My present good would little bettered be;
But small the evil would not prove, if I
Saw of my Clarice what I would not see.
This were a thousand against one to stake;
To hazard much where I could nothing take."

The knight of Clermont buried in this mood,
Who lifted not his visage from the floor,
A mariner with much attention viewed,
That overright was seated at his oar:
And, for he deemed he fully understood
The thought that pressed the cavalier so sore,
Made him (well-spoken was the man and bold)
Wake from his muse, some talk with him to hold

The substance of the talk between the two
Was, that the husband little wit possest
Who, wishing to assay if she was true,
Had tried his wife by too severe a test;
For woman, proof to gold and silver, who,
Armed but with modesty, defends her breast,
This from a thousand falchions will defend
More surely, and through burning fires will wend.

The mariner subjoined: "Thou saidest well;
With gifts too rich he should not her have prest;
For, these assaults, these charges, to repel,
Not good alike is every human breast.
I know not if of wife thou hast heard tell
(For haply not with us the tale may rest)
That in the very sin her husband spied,
For which she by his sentence should have died.

"My lord should have remembered, gold and meed
Have upon every hardest matter wrought;
But he forgot this truth in time of need;
And so upon his head this ruin brought.
Ah! would that he in proof, like me, a deed
Done in this neighboring city had been taught,
His country and mine own; which lake and fen,
Brimming with Mincius' prisoned waters, pen.

"I of Adonio speak, that in a hound
A treasure on the judge's wife conferred."
"Thereof," replied the paladin, "the sound
Hath not o'erpast the Alps: for never word
Of this in neighboring France, nor in my round
Through far and foreign countries have I heard:
So tell, if telling irks not," said the peer,
"What willingly I bown myself to hear."

The boatman then; "Erewhile was of this town
 One Anselm, that of worthy lineage came;
 A wight that spent his youth in flowing gown,
 Studying his Ulpian: he of honest fame,
 Beauty, and state assorting with his own,
 A consort sought, and one of noble name:
 Nor vainly; in a neighboring city, crowned
 With superhuman beauty, one he found.

"She such fair manners and so graceful shows,
 She seems all love and beauty; and much more
 Perchance than maketh for her lord's repose;
 Than well befits the reverend charge he bore.
 He, wedded, straight in jealousy outgoes
 All jealous men that ever were before:
 Yet she affords not other cause for care
 But that she is too witty and too fair.

"In the same city dwelt a cavalier,
 Numbered that old and honored race among,
 Sprung from the haughty lineage, which whilere
 Out of the jaw-bone of a serpent sprung:
 Whence Manto, doomed my native walls to rear,
 Descended, and with her a kindred throng,
 The cavalier (Adonio was he named)
 Was with the beauties of the dame inflamed;

"And for the furtherance of his amorous quest,
 To grace himself, began his wealth to spend,
 Without restraint, in banquet and in vest,
 And what might most a cavalier commend:
 If he Tiberius' treasure had possest,
 He of his riches would have made an end.
 I well believe two winters were not done,
 Ere his paternal fortune was outrun.

"The house erewhile, frequented by a horde,
Morning and evening, of so many friends,
Is solitary; since no more his board
Beneath the partridge, quail, and pheasant bends.
Of that once noble troop upon the lord,
Save beggars, hardly any one attends.
Ruined, at length he thinks he will begone
To other country, where he is unknown.

"He leaves his native land with this intent,
Nor letteth any his departure know;
And coasts, in tears and making sad lament,
The marshes that about his city go:
He his heart's queen, amid his discontent,
Meanwhile forgets not, for this second woe.
Lo! him another accident that falls,
From sovereign woe to sovereign bliss recalls!

"He saw a peasant who with heavy stake
Smote mid some sapling trunks on every side:
Adonio stopt, and wherefore so he strake,
Asked of the rustic, that in answer cried,
Within that clump a passing ancient snake,
Amid the tangled stems he had espied:
A longer serpent and more thick to view
He never saw, nor thought to see anew;

"And that from thence he would not wend his way
Until the reptile he had found and slain.
When so Adonio heard the peasant say,
He scarce his speech with patience could sustain,
Aye reverence to the serpent wont to pay,
The honored ensign of his ancient strain;
In memory that their primal race had grown
Erewhile from serpent's teeth by Cadmus sown;

"And by the churl the offended knight so said,
 And did withal, he made him quit the emprise;
 Leaving the hunted serpent neither dead,
 Nor injured, nor pursued in further wise.
 Thither, where he believes would least have spread
 The story of his woe, Adonio hies;
 And in discomfort and in sorrow wears,
 Far from his native land, seven weary years.

"Neither for distance nor for straitened cheer,
 Which will not let Thought run its restless round,
 Ceased Love, so wont to rein the cavalier,
 Aye to inflame his heart, aye vex his wound:
 At length those beauties, to his eyes so dear,
 Perforce must he revisit, homeward bound.
 Unshorn, afflicted, he, in poor array,
 Thither returns, from whence he went his way.

"My city, at the time whereof I tell,
 To Rome was fain to send an embassy;
 That sometime near his Holiness should dwell;
 And for how long a time could none foresee.
 Upon our judge the lot of envoy fell:
 O day, that ever wept by him will be!
 To be excused, Anselmo promised, prayed,
 And bribed; but at the last perforce obeyed.

"As no less cruel and less hard to abide
 He deemed a woe which caused such piteous smart,
 Than had he seen a hostile hand his side
 Lay bare, and from his bosom pluck his heart:
 Dead-white with jealous fear his cheek is dyed,
 Through doubt of his fair consort while apart;
 And in the mode he deems may best avail,
 He supplicates her not in faith to fail.

“ ‘Nor beauty,’ to his wife the husband cries,
‘Nor noble blood, nor fortune, are enow
To make a woman to true honor rise,
Save chaste in name and deed;’ subjoining how
The virtue that mankind most highly prize
Is that which triumphs after strife; and now,
Through his long absence, a fair field and wide
Is opened where that virtue may be tried.

“With such persuasions, and with many more
Anselm exhorts the lady to be true.
His going doth his woful wife deplore.
O heaven, what tears, what loud complaints ensue!
Immersed in her despair, that lady swore,
Sooner the sun bedimmed the world should view
Than she would break her faith; she would expire
Sooner than she would cherish such desire.

“Though to the lady’s promise and protest
He lent belief, and somewhat calmed his fears,
Until he further hear he will not rest;
And till he can find matter for his tears.
A soothsayer he among his friends possest,
Prized for his knowledge, as the first of seers;
Who of all witchery and of magic art
Had read the whole, or read the greater part.

“To him before departing does he pray,
To take the charge upon himself to see
If true would be Argia while away
(So name his consort), or the contrary,
Won by his prayers, he takes the time o’ the day;
Figures the heavens as they appear to be.
Anselmo left him at his work, and came
His answer on the following day to claim.

"The astrologer is silent, loth to expose
 A matter that will work the doctor woe;
 And would excuse himself with many a gloze:
 But when he sees, he would the evil know,
 'Argia will break faith with him,' he shows,
 'As soon as he shall from his threshold go.
 Nor prayer shall soften her, nor beauty fire:
 Corrupted will she be by gain and hire.'

"When to Anselmo's early doubt and fear
 Are joined the threatenings of the signs above,
 How stands his heart may well to thee appear,
 If thou hast known the accidents of love;
 And worse than every woe, wherewith whilere
 The afflicted spirits of that husband strove,
 Is that it by the prophet is foretold,
 Argia's honor will be bought and sold.

"Now to support his wife, as best he may,
 From falling into such an evil deed,
 For man, alas, will sometimes disarray
 The altar, when he finds himself in need,
 What gold and gems the judge had put away,
 (A plenteous store) he leaves; and field and mead,
 Rents, fruits, and all possessions whatsoe'er
 Leaves to his consort; all his worldly gear:

" 'With power,' he said, 'not only without measure,
 These, as thou needest, to enjoy and spend,
 But do with them according to thy pleasure,
 Consume and fling away, and give and vend:
 Other account I ask not of my treasure,
 If such as now I find thee in the end;
 But such as now remain;—at thy command
 (Even shouldst thou squander both) are house and land.

“ ‘Unless she heard he thither made repair,
He prayed that she would dwell not in the town;
But would a farm of his inhabit, where
She might with all convenience live alone.’
And this besought he of his consort fair,
As thinking, that the rustics, which on down
Pasture their flocks, or fruitful fallows till,
Could ne’er contaminate her honest will.

“Her fearful husband still embracing close,
Her arms about his neck Argia threw:
A burst of tears her visage overflows;
For from her eyes two streams their way pursue.
She grieves, he guilty should his wife suppose;
As if she hath already been untrue:
For his suspicion to its source she traced;
That in her faith no faith Anselmo placed.

“Citing their long farewell, I should exceed.
‘To thee at length,’ he so the dame address,
‘I recommend my honor;’ and indeed
Took leave, and on his road in earnest prest;
And truly felt, on wheeling round his steed,
As if his heart was issuing from his breast.
She follows him as long as she can follow
With eyes whose tears her furrowed visage hollow.

“Poor, pale, unshorn, and wretched (as whilere
To you in former strain by me was said),
Homeward meanwhile the wandering cavalier,
Hoping he there should be unknown, had made.
Beside the lake that pilgrim journeyed, near
The city, where he gave the serpent aid,
In that thick brake besieged by village swain,
Who with his staff the reptile would have slain.

"Arriving here, upon the dawn of light,
 For yet some stars were glimmering in the skies,
 Approaching him, in foreign vesture dight,
 Along the shore, a damsel he espies.
 Though neither squire nor waiting-wench in sight
 Appears, yet noble is the lady's guise.
 With pleasing visage she Adonio boards.
 And then breaks silence in the following words:

" 'Albeit thou know'st me not, O cavalier,
 I am thy kin, and greatly bound to thee:
 I am thy kin; for of the lineage clear
 Derived of haughty Cadmus' seed are we.
 I am the fairy Manto, that whilere
 Laid the first stone of this rude villagery;
 And (as thou haply mayst have heard it famed)
 Mantua from me the rising town was named.

" 'O' the fairies am I one; with that to show
 Our fatal state, and what it doth import:
 We to all other kinds of ill below
 Are subject by our natal influence, short
 Of death; but with immortal being such woe
 Is coupled, death is not of direr sort.
 For every seventh day we all must take,
 By certain law, the form of spotted snake.

" 'So sad it is that loathsome coil to fill,
 And prone, at length, upon the ground to crawl;
 Equal to this there is no worldly ill;
 So that immortal life is cursed by all.
 And thou the debt I owe thee (for my will
 Is to inform thee of its cause withal)
 Shalt know as well; how on that fatal day
 Of change we are to countless ills a prey.

“ ‘So hated as the serpent beast is none;
And we that wear its evil form, alarm,
Outrage, and war endure from every one:
For all that see us, hunt and do us harm:
Unless we can to ground for shelter run,
We feel how heavy falls man’s furious arm,
Happier it were to die, than languish—broke,
Battered, and crippled by the cruel stroke.

“ ‘My mighty obligation due to thee
Is that, when once thou didst this greenwood thread,
Thou from a rustic’s fury rescuedst me,
By whose ill handling was I sore bested.
But for thine aid, I should not have got free,
Without a broken spine or battered head:
With body crooked and crushed I should have lain,
Albeit I could not by his arm be slain.

“ ‘Because thou hast to know upon the day
We sprang from earth with scales of dragon dight
—Subject to us at other times—to obey
The heavens, refuse; and we are void of might:
At other seasons, at our simple say
The circling sun stands still, and dims its light:
Fixt earth is moved, and in a circle wheels:
Ice at our word takes fire, and fire congeals.

“ ‘Now here, prepared to render thee the meed
Of benefit then done to me, I stand;
For now, dismantled of my dragon weed,
Vainly no grace of me wilt thou demand.
Even now, thrice richer art thou by my deed,
Than when thou heirdst erewhile thy father’s land.
Nor will I that henceforth thou shalt be poor;
But wealth, the more ’tis spent, augment the more.

“ ‘And because with that ancient knot thou still,
 I know, art tangled, which by Love was tied,
 The mode and order, how thou mayst fulfil
 Thy wishes, shall by me be signified.
 Now that her lord is absent, ’tis my will
 My scheme without delay by thee be tried;
 Go forth the lady at her farm to find,
 Without the town; nor will I stay behind.’

“She her discourse continuing, ’gan advise
 What form he to that lady’s eyes should take:
 I say, what vesture wear, and in what wise
 Should speak, how tempt her; what entreaties make
 And said, how she her figure would disguise;
 For, save the day wherein she was a snake,
 Upon all others went the fairy drest
 In whatsoever figure pleased her best.

“She in a pilgrim’s habit clothed the knight,
 Such as from door to door our alms entreat:
 Into a dog she changed herself to sight;
 The smallest ever seen, of aspect sweet,
 Long hair, than ermine’s fur more snowy white;
 And skilled withal in many a wondrous feat,
 Toward Argia’s villa, so transmewed,
 The fairy and the knight their way pursued;

“And at the laborers’ cabins in his round
 The stripling halts, before he stops elsewhere;
 And certain rustic reeds begins to sound;
 His dog is up, and dances to the air.
 The dame; that hears the voice and cry rebound,
 Is by the rumor moved to see the pair.
 Into her court she has the pilgrim brought,
 As Anselm’s evil destiny had wrought:

"And here Adonio gives the dog command;
And here by that obedient dog is shown
Dance of our country and of foreign land,
With paces, graces, fashions of his own;
And finally he does, amid that band,
With winning ways what else is to be done,
With such attention of the admiring crew,
None winked their eyes, their breath they scarcely drew

"Great marvel in the dame, then longing, bred
That gentle dog: she one that her had nursed
With no mean offer to his master sped.

'If all the riches for which women thirst'
(To her embassadress in answer said
The wary pilgrim) 'In my bags were pursed,
There is not in that treasure what would boot
To purchase of my dog one single foot.'

"And he, the truth of his discourse to show,
Into a corner took the beldam old,
And bade the dog in courtesy bestow
Upon that messenger a mark of gold.
The dog obeyed, and shook himself; and lo!
The treasure! which he bade her have and hold:
Thereto he added, 'Thinkest thou by aught
A dog so fair and useful can be bought?

" 'For whatsoever I of him demand,
I empty-handed never go away;
Now pearl, now ring will he shake from him, and
Now gift me with some rich and fair array.
Yet tell madonna he is at her command;
But not for gold; for him no gold can pay;
But if I for one night her arms may fill,
Him may she take and do with him her will."

"So said, a gem, new-dropt, on her he prest,
 And bade her to the lady bear the boon.
 That in the costly produce she possest
 Ten, twenty ducats' value deemed the crone.
 She bore the message to the dame addressed,
 And after wrought on her till she was won
 To buy the beauteous dog, 'who might be bought
 By payment of a price that costeth naught.'

"Argia somewhat coy at first appears;
 Partly that she her faith will not forego;
 Partly that she believes not all she hears
 That beldam of the dog and pilgrim show.
 The nurse insists, and dins into her ears,
 That seldom such a chance occurs below;
 And makes her fix another day to see
 That dog, when fewer eyes on her shall be.

"The next appearance which Adonio made
 Was ruin to the doctor; for the hound
 Doubloons, by dozens and by dozens, braid
 Of pearl, and costly jewels scattered round.
 So that Argia's pride of heart was laid;
 And so much less the dame maintained her ground,
 When she in him, who made the proffer, viewed
 The Mantuan cavalier that whilom wooed.

"The harlot nurse's evil oratory,
 The prayer and presence of the suitor lord,
 The occasion to acquire that mighty fee,
 Which wretched Anselm's absence would afford,
 The hope that none would her accuser be,
 So vanquish her chaste thoughts, she makes the accord,
 Accepts the wondrous dog; and, as his pay,
 To her leman yields herself a willing prey.

“The fruits of love long culled that cavalier
With his fair lady; unto whom the fay
Took such affection, whom she held so dear,
That she obliged herself with her to stay.
Through all the signs the sun had traveled, ere
The judge had leave to wend his homeward way.
He finally returned; but sore afraid
Through what the astrologer erewhile had said.

“Arrived, his first employment is to run
To that astrologer’s abode, and crave,
If shame and evil to his wife be done;
Or if she yet her faith and honor save.
The heavens he figured; and to every one
Of the seven planets its due station gave;
Then to the judge replied that it had been
Even as he feared, and as it was foreseen.

“ ‘By richest presents tempted to forego
Her faith, a prey was she to other wight.’
This to the doctor’s heart was such a blow;
Nor lance, nor spear, I deem, so sorely smite.
To be more certified he wends (although
He is too well assured the seer is right)
To that old nurse; and, drawing her apart,
To learn the truth employs his every art.

“He in wide circles doth about her wind,
Hoping now here, now there, to spy some trace:
But naught in the beginning can he find,
With whatsoever care he sifts the case.
For she, as not unpractised in that kind,
Denies, and fronts him with untroubled face;
And, as well taught, above a month stands out,
Holding the judge ’twixt certainty and doubt.

"How blest would doubt appear, had he that wound
 Foreseen which would be given by certainty!
 When out of that false nurse at last he found
 He could not fish the truth by prayer or fee,
 Touching no chord but yielded a false sound,
 He shrewdly waits his time till there should be
 Discord between the beldam and his wife:
 For whereso women are, is stir and strife.

"And even that Anselmo waited so
 Befell; since, angered by the first despite,
 Unsought of him, to him that nurse did go,
 To tell the whole; and nothing hid from sight.
 How sank his heart beneath that cruel blow,
 'Twere long to say; how prostrate lay his sprite!
 So was the wretched judge with grief opprest,
 He of his wits well-nigh was dispossess;

"And finally resolved to die, so burned
 His rage, but first would kill the faithless dame;
 And he with one destructive falchion yearned
 To free himself from woe and her from shame.
 Stung by such blind and furious thoughts, returned
 Anselmo to the city, in a flame;
 And to the farm despatched a follower true,
 Charged with the bidding he was bound to do.

"He bids the servant to the villa go,
 And to Argia in his name pretend
 He by a fever is reduced so low,
 She hardly can arrive before his end.
 Hence without waiting escort—would she show
 Her love—she with his man must backward wend
 (Wend with him will she surely, nor delay)
 And bids him cut her throat upon the way.

“The serving-man to call his lady went
Prepared his lord’s command on her to do.
Having her little dog at starting hent,
She mounted and began her journey, through
The dog advised of Anselm’s ill intent,
But bid no less her purpose to pursue;
For he had taken thought for her; and aid
Should in the time of peril be purveyed.

“The servant from his pathway turns aside,
And through bye-roads and solitary goes;
Purposely lighting on a stream, whose tide
From Apennine into our river flows;
Where, both of farm and busy city wide,
A holt, and dark and dismal greenwood grows.
Silent appeared the gloomy place, and one
Fitting the cruel deed which should be done.

“He drew his sword on her, and signified
The mandate by her angry husband given;
That so she might entreat, before she died,
Forgiveness of her every sin from Heaven.
I know not how; she vanished from his side,
When through her flank the blade he would have
driven.
Vainly long time he seeks her, then remains
Foiled and outscorned, for guerdon of his pains.

“He all astound and with bewildered face,
And full of shame, to seek his lord returns;
Who from the servant that unwonted case,
Unweeting how the thing had happened learns:
Nor knows the fairy Manto fills a place
About Argia, prompt to serve her turns.
Because the nurse, that all the rest revealed
(I know not wherefore, I), had this concealed.

"He knows not what to do: the outrage sore
 Avenged he has not, nor his pain allayed:
 What was a mote is now a beam; so sore
 It prest him; on his heart so heavy weighed.
 So plain is what was little known before,
 He fears that it will shortly be displayed.
 At first, he haply might have hid his woe;
 Which Rumor now throughout the world will blow.

"Full well he wots, that since his evil vein
 He to his wife, unhappy wretch! hath shown,
 Not to be subject to his yoke again,
 She to some strong protector will have flown;
 Who to his ignominy will maintain,
 And utter scorn, the lady as his own:
 And haply may she to some losel flee,
 Who will her paramour and pander be.

"For remedy; he sends in haste a band
 Of messengers, with letters far and nigh.
 Some of Argia here, some there demand;
 Nor town unsearched is left in Lombardy.
 Next he in person goes; nor any land
 Leaves unexamined by himself or spy.
 Yet cannot he discover means or way
 For learning where concealed his consort lay.

"The servant last he called on whom was laid
 The ill hest, but who had served not his despite;
 And thither by his guidance was conveyed,
 Where (as 'twas said) she vanished from his sight;
 Who haply lurked by day in greenwood-shade,
 And to some friendly roof retired at night.
 He thither guided, where but forest trees
 He thinks to find, a sumptuous palace sees.

"This while for bright Argia in that part

The fay had made with speedy toil prepare
An alabaster palace by her art,

Gilded within, without, and everywhere.

So wonderful, no tongue could tell, no heart

Conceive, how rich within, without how fair:
That, which thou deemed so fair, my master's home,
Is but a cottage to that costly dome.

"Curtain and cloth of arras deck the wall,

Sumptuously woven and in different wise,
In vaulted cellar and in littered stall;

Not only spread in latticed galleries,
Not only spread in lordly bower and hall.

Vase, gold and silver, gems of many dyes,
Carved into cup and charger, blue, red, green,
And countless cloths of silk and gold are seen.

"He chanced upon the costly dome (as I

To you was in my story making known)
When he expected not a hut to spy,

And but a weary waste of woodland lone.
As he beheld the dome with wondering eye,

Anselmo thought his intellects were gone:
That he was drunk, or dreamed that wondrous sight
He weened, or that his wits had taken flight.

"An Æthiop woman posted at the door,

With blubber lip and nostril, he descries.
Nor will he see again, nor e'er before

Had seen a visage of such loathsome guise:
Ill-favored—such was Æsop feigned of yore:

If there, she would have saddened Paradise.
Greasy and foul and beggarly her vest;
Nor half her hideousness have I exprest.

"Anselm, who saw no other wight beside
 To tell who was that mansion's lord, drew nigh
 To the Æthiopian, and to her applied;
 And she; 'The owner of this house am I.'
 The judge was well assured the negress lied,
 And made that answer but in mockery:
 But with repeated oaths the negress swears
 'Tis hers, and none with her the mansion shares;

" 'And would he see the palace, him invites
 To view it at his ease; and recommends
 If there be ought within which him delights,
 To take it for himself or for his friends.'
 Anselmo hears, and from his horse alights,
 Gives it his man; and o'er the threshold wends;
 And by the hag conducted, mounts from hall
 Below to bower above, admiring all.

"Form, site, and sumptuous work doth he behold,
 And royal ornament and fair device;
 And oft repeats, not all this wide world's gold
 To buy the egregious mansion would suffice.
 To him in answer said that negress old;
 'And yet this dome, like others, hath its price;
 If not in gold and silver, price less high
 Than gold and silver will the palace buy.'

"And she to him prefers the same request,
 Which erst Adonio to Argia made.
 A fool he deemed the woman and possest,
 Who for a boon so foul and filthy prayed.
 Yet ceased she not, though more than thrice repress;
 And strove so well Anselmo to persuade,
 Proffering, for his reward, the palace still,
 She wrought on him to do her evil will.

"The wife Argia, that is hid fast by,
When in such sin her husband she descries,
Springs forth and saith; 'Ah! worthy deed! which I
Of doctor, that was deemed so passing wise,
Found in such foul and filthy work, espy!'
Bethink thee, if his kindling blushes rise;
If he stands mute! why opens not thy hollow
And central womb, O earth, the wretch to swallow?

"To clear herself and shame him, doth she stun
Anselmo, never ceasing to upbraid.
"What pain should by thyself be undergone
For this so filthy deed, (Argia said)
If thou would'st take my life for having done
What Nature prompted and a lover prayed;
One that was fair and gentle, and who brought
A gift, compared wherewith, this dome is nought?

" 'If worthy of one death thou deemest me,
Worthy art thou a hundred deaths to die:
And, though my pleasure might I do on thee,
So passing puissant in this place am I,
No other or worse vengeance done shall be
Upon my side, on thy delinquency.
The give against the take, O husband, place;
And, as 'twas granted thee, so grant me grace:

" 'And be there peace between us, and accord
That all be to forgetfulness consigned;
Nor thee I of thy fault by deed or word,
Nor me of mine, henceforward thou remind!'
This seemed a goodly bargain to her lord;
Nor to such pardon was he disinclined.
Thus peace and concord they at home restore,
And love each other dearly evermore."

EPISODES
FROM THE MEMOIRS OF
BENVENUTO CELLINI
(1500-1570)

[To be read at the end of Chapter VI, page 60.]

IT happened about this time that I had given a little entertainment one evening for my mistress, Pantasilea, to which I invited several men of genius of my acquaintance. At the very moment that we were sitting down to table, Signor Giovanni and Luigi Pulci entered the room, and after some little ceremony were prevailed upon to stay to supper. The amorous courtesan no sooner set her eye on the handsome youth, than she formed a design upon him. I perceived the snare, and, the instant the supper was over, I called Luigi aside and requested him, by the obligations he had acknowledged himself under to me, not to listen, on any account, to the insinuations of that artful woman. In answer he exclaimed, "What, my friend Benvenuto, do you take me for a madman?" I told him I did not take him for a madman, but for an inexperienced youth; at the same time assuring him that I gave myself not the least trouble about her, but that my concern was for him, and I should be sorry to see him ruined by so abandoned a strumpet. To this he answered, that he wished he might break his neck if he ever would so much as open his lips to her. He must have sworn this oath with great earnestness, for it was his fate afterward to break his neck, as will appear in the sequel.

He began to appear every day new clothed, either in velvet or in silk, and seemed to be addicted to all manner of debauchery; in short, he had thrown aside all his virtuous qualities, and pretended neither to see nor know me when we met; because I had reproved him, telling him that he had abandoned himself to all kinds of vices, and that they would be his destruction. Sig-

nor Giovanni, with whom he was a favorite, had bought him a fine black horse, which cost a hundred and fifty crowns; it was an admirable pacer, and Luigi rode it every day to pay his court to the courtesan Pantasilea. Though I beheld this scene, it gave me no manner of concern; I said only that all things act according to their nature, and I addressed myself to my business.

It happened one Sunday evening in the summer that we were invited by the famous statuary Michelangelo of Siena to sup with him. At this supper Bacchiaca, of whom mention has been made, was a guest, and he had brought with him Pantasilea, with whom he had been formerly intimate. While we were at supper she rose from table, telling us that a sudden indisposition obliged her to retire, but that she would quickly return. We were engaged in cheerful conversation, and she stayed away longer than we expected. I stood listening, and heard some persons talking in a low voice in the street, while I held a table knife in my hand. The window was so near the table that, having risen a little, I saw Luigi Pulci and Pantasilea in close conference, and overheard the former say, "If that cursed Benvenuto should happen to discover us, we should be undone." She made answer, "Luigi, be under no apprehensions; observe what a noise they are making; they are far from thinking of us." At these words I perceived who they were, when, immediately leaping from the window, I seized Luigi by the cloak, and should certainly have killed him with the knife in my hand, had he not instantly clapped spurs to a little white horse that he rode, and, leaving his cloak behind to save his life, fled with Pantasilea to a neighboring church. Those who were at table having suddenly risen, came all up to me, and begged I would not give myself or them any trouble for the sake of a harlot. I answered, that I should never have stirred upon her account, but that I could

not help showing my resentment to that villain, who behaved to me in so perfidious a manner.

I would not therefore give ear to the persuasions and entreaties of my worthy friends, but, snatching up my sword, went unaccompanied to Prati, for the house where we were at supper was near the gate Del Castello, which led to Prati. It was not long before the sun set, and I returned slowly to Rome, when it was already dark, but the gates of the city were not locked. I went to Pantasilea's habitation, firmly resolved, in case Luigi Pulci should be there, to treat them both as they deserved. Perceiving that nobody but a servant girl was in the house I laid aside my cloak and the scabbard of my sword, and came up to the house, which stood behind the place called Banchi, on the river Tiber. Opposite to this house was a garden belonging to an inn-keeper, whose name was Romolo. This garden was enclosed with a quick-set hedge, in which I concealed myself in order to wait the coming of the lady and her gallant. I had remained there some time when my friend Bacchiaca happened to pass by, and, whether he really thought I should go there, or had been told so, called to me in a low voice by the name of *gossip*, for so we used to style each other in jest. He besought me for God's sake to desist, uttering these words almost with tears in his eyes: "Gossip, I beg you would not hurt this poor unfortunate woman, for nothing can justly be laid to her charge." "If you do not directly quit the place," cried I, "I will cut you across the head with my sword." My poor gossip, frightened by this language, felt much disordered, and had not gone far, when he found himself under the necessity of obeying a natural impulse.

It was a bright starry night, and the sky shone with a refulgent luster; when suddenly I heard several horses galloping, on both sides. This was occasioned by Luigi and Pantasilea, who were accompanied by one Signor

Benvegnato of Perugia, chamberlain to Pope Clement. Four valiant captains from Perugia attended them, with other brave young officers, in all, twelve persons that wore swords. When I perceived my situation, not knowing which way to get off, I resolved to continue under the hedge; but the briars pricked and hurt me very much, so that I could no longer bear it, and, like a goaded bull, I resolved to take a leap and seek safety by flight. At this time Luigi had his arms about Pantasilea's neck, and told her he must have a kiss in spite of that traitor Benvenuto. These words, which added a new sting to the pricking of the briars, provoked me to such a degree that I leaped out of the hedge, and, lifting my sword, cried out, "I will instantly be the death of you all." My sword fell upon Luigi's shoulders, but as the young fellow was protected by a coat of mail, for they had wrapped him up in iron, the weapon was turned aside, and, after cutting him over the nose wounded the face of Pantasilea. Both having fallen to the ground, Bacchiaca, with his hose half down his legs, ran away screaming. I then turned about boldly to the rest with my drawn sword, when my valiant adversaries, hearing a loud uproar in the inn, imagined they had to deal with a party of a hundred men. They had, however drawn their swords, but some of their horses taking fright, this occasioned so much confusion amongst them that two of the cleverest were thrown, and the rest betook themselves to flight.

I, seeing the affair turn out happily, made off with the utmost speed, not caring to tempt fortune further than honor required. In this terrible confusion and hurly-burly, some of the gentlemen and officers had wounded themselves with their own swords. Signor Benvegnato, the Pope's chamberlain, was thrown down and trampled upon by his own mule; his servant, attempting to draw his sword, fell with him at the same time, and gave his

master a deep wound in the hand. This accident, more than all the rest, made Signor Benvegnato swear in his Perugian jargon, that by G— Benvegnato should teach Benvenuto manners. He desired one of the officers, who perhaps had more courage than the rest, but was young and had very little to say for himself, to deliver me a challenge. This gentleman called upon me at the house of a Neapolitan nobleman, who had heard of my abilities and seen some of my performances, and, being likewise convinced that I was fit for the military profession, to which he was attached, grew exceedingly fond of me. Seeing myself thus protected and caressed, and being in proper spirits, I gave such an answer to the officer as I believe made him heartily repent his coming on such an errand.

A few days later, Luigi, Pantasilea, and the rest, being pretty well recovered of their wounds, the nobleman, my patron, was solicited by Signor Benvegnato, whose passion had by this time subsided, to prevail upon me to be reconciled to Luigi, adding that the gallant officers who were with him, and who had never had any difference with me on their own account, would be glad to cultivate my acquaintance. The nobleman made answer that he would persuade me to agree to all that was proposed, and should willingly undertake to accommodate matters, on condition that there was to be no upbraiding on either side for what had passed, as that would reflect dishonor on themselves; that we should only shake hands and drink together in token of reconciliation, and so he would engage to make all things agreeable. This design was carried into execution. One Thursday evening the nobleman carried me to the house of Signor Benvegnato, where all the military gentlemen that had been in the late skirmish were at table. My patron was accompanied by more than thirty gallant men well armed, a circumstance which Signor Benvegna-

to did not expect. When we had entered the hall, my friend addressed them thus: "Save you, gentlemen! I am come with Benvenuto, whom I love as my own brother; and we gladly present ourselves with an intention to do whatever you think proper to enjoin us." Benvegnato, seeing the hall crowded with such a number, answered: "All we desire of you is peace; we want nothing more." He then promised that the Governor of Rome should give me no trouble.

In the mean time Luigi Pulci, being cured, every day took an airing upon his black horse, which he managed with great skill. One day, after a drizzling rain, having made his horse prance and curvet before Pantasilea's door, he happened to slip, and the horse fell upon him. By this accident his right leg was broken, and a few days later he died in the house of Pantasilea; the curse that he had solemnly invoked against himself in the presence of God being thus accomplished.

[To be read after the second paragraph on page 275.]

I had but just dismounted from my horse, when one of those excellent persons who rejoice in mischief-making came to tell me that Pagolo Micceri had taken a house for the little hussy Caterina and her mother, and that he was always going there, and whenever he mentioned me, used words of scorn to this effect: "Benvenuto set the fox to watch the grapes, and thought I would not eat them! Now he is satisfied with going about and talking big, and thinks I am afraid of him. But I have girt this sword and dagger to my side in order to show him that my steel can cut as well as his, and that I too am a Florentine, of the Micceri, a far better family than his Cellini." The scoundrel who reported this poisonous gossip spoke it with such good effect that I felt a fever in the instant swoop upon me:

and when I say fever, I mean fever, and no mere metaphor. The insane passion which took possession of me might have been my death, had I not resolved to give it vent as the occasion offered. I ordered the Ferrarese workman, Chioccia, to come with me, and made a servant follow with my horse. When we reached the house where that worthless villain was, I found the door ajar, and entered. I noticed that he carried sword and dagger, and was sitting on a big chest with his arm round Caterina's neck; at the moment of my arrival, I could hear that he and her mother were talking about me. Pushing the door open, I drew my sword, and set the point of it at his throat, not giving him the time to think whether he too carried steel. At the same instant I cried out: "Vile coward! recommend your soul to God, for you are a dead man." Without budging from his seat, he called three times: "Mother, mother, help me!" Though I had come there fully determined to take his life, half my fury ebbed away when I heard this idiotic exclamation. I ought to add that I had told Chioccia not to let the girl or her mother leave the house, since I meant to deal with them after I had disposed of their bully. So I went on holding my sword at his throat, and now and then just pricked him with the point, pouring out a torrent of terrific threats at the same time. But when I found he did not stir a finger in his own defense, I began to wonder what I should do next; my menacing attitude could not be kept up forever; so at last it came into my head to make them marry, and complete my vengeance at a later period. Accordingly, I formed my resolution, and began: "Take that ring, coward, from your finger, and marry her, that I may get satisfaction from you afterward according to your deserts." He replied at once: "If only you do not kill me, I will do whatever you command." "Then," said I, "put that ring upon her hand." When the sword's point was

withdrawn a few inches from his throat, he wedded her with the ring. But I added: "This is not enough. I shall send for two notaries, in order that the marriage may be ratified by contract." Bidding Chioccia go for the lawyers, I turned to the girl and her mother, and, using the French language, spoke as follow: "Notaries and witnesses are coming; the first of you who blabs about this affair will be killed upon the spot; nay, I will murder you all three. So beware, and keep a quiet tongue in your heads." To him I said in Italian: "If you offer any resistance to what I shall propose, upon the slightest word you utter I will stab you till your guts run out upon this floor." He answered: "Only promise not to kill me, and I will do whatever you command." The notaries and witnesses arrived; a contract, valid and in due form, was drawn up; then my heat and fever left me. I paid the lawyers and took my departure.

On the following day Bologna came to Paris on purpose, and sent for me through Mattio del Nasaro. I went to see him; and he met me with a glad face, entreating me to regard him as a brother, and saying that he would never speak about that work again, since he recognized quite well that I was right.

If I did not confess that in some of these episodes I acted wrongly, the world might think I was not telling the truth about those in which I say I acted rightly. Therefore I admit that it was a mistake to inflict so singular a vengeance upon Pagolo Micceri. In truth, had I believed him to be so utterly feeble, I should not have conceived the notion of branding him with such infamy as I am going to relate.

Not satisfied with having made him take the woman to wife, I completed my revenge by inviting her to sit to me as a model, and dealing with her thus. I gave her thirty sous a day, paid in advance, and a good meal,

and obliged her to pose before me. Then I made her serve my pleasure, out of spite against her husband, jeering at them both the while.

Furthermore, I kept her for hours together in position, greatly to her discomfort. This gave her as much annoyance as it gave me pleasure; for she was beautifully made, and brought me much credit as a model. At last, noticing that I did not treat her with the same consideration as before her marriage, she began to grumble and talk big in her French way about her husband, who was now serving the Prior of Capua, a brother of Piero Strozzi. On the first occasion when she did this, the mere mention of the fellow roused me to intolerable fury; still I bore it, greatly against the grain, as well as I was able, reflecting that I could hardly find so suitable a subject for my art as she was. So I reasoned thus in my own mind: "I am now taking two different kinds of revenge. If then I wreak my spite so fully upon him, while upon her I inflict the discomfort of posing in such strange attitudes for such a length of time—which, beside the pleasure I derive, brings me both profit and credit through my art—what more can I desire?" While I was turning over these calculations, the wretch redoubled her insulting speeches, always prating big about her husband, till she goaded me beyond the bounds of reason. Yielding myself up to blind rage, I seized her by the hair, and dragged her up and down my room, beating and kicking her till I was tired. There was no one who could come to her assistance. When I had well pounded her she swore that she would never visit me again. Then for the first time I perceived that I had acted very wrongly; for I was losing a grand model, who brought me honor through my art. Moreover, when I saw her body all torn and bruised and swollen, I reflected that, even if I persuaded her to return, I should have to put her under

medica. treatment for at least a fortnight before I could make use of her.

Well, to return to Caterina. I sent my old serving-woman, named Ruberta, who had a most kindly disposition, to help her dress. She brought food and drink to the miserable baggage; and after rubbing a little bacon fat into her worst wounds, they ate what was left of the meat together. When she had finished dressing, she went off cursing all Italians in the King's service.

Assuredly, upon that first occasion, I felt I had done very wrong, and Ruberta rebuked me after this fashion: "You are a cruel monster to maltreat such a handsome girl so brutally." When I excused my conduct by narrating all the tricks which she and her mother had played off upon me under my own roof, Ruberta scoldingly replied that that was nothing—that was only French manners. When I heard this argument, I laughed aloud, and then told Ruberta to go and see how Caterina was, since I should like to employ her again while finishing the work I had on hand. The old woman took me up sharply, saying that I had no *savoir vivre*: "Only wait till daybreak, and she will come of herself; whereas, if you send to ask after her or visit her, she will give herself airs and keep away."

On the following morning Caterina came to our door, and knocked so violently that, being below, I ran to see whether it was a madman or some member of the household. When I opened, the creature laughed and fell upon my neck, embracing and kissing me, and asked me if I was still angry with her. I said, "No!" Then she added: "Let me have something good to break my fast on." So I supplied her well with food, and partook of it at the same table in sign of reconciliation. Afterward I began to model from her; and at last, just at the same hour as on the previous day, she irritated me to such a pitch that I gave her the same drubbing.

AN EPISODE FROM THE FLAME

BY

GABRIELE d'ANNUNZIO

(Born in 1864).

[To be read at the top of page 158.]

"See!"

He touched his lower lip, which had a slight red mark just below its edge; he pressed the tiny wound, and extended toward La Foscarina the tip of his finger, which was tinged with red from the drop of blood that had been drawn.

"You have left your mark upon me. You bit me like some wild thing."

Suddenly she rose to her feet, quivering as if he had touched her with a red-hot iron. She fixed her large eyes upon him, as if she would devour him with that look. Her nostrils dilated; a terrible, irresistible force possessed her whole body, which visibly vibrated beneath the flowing folds of her robe. Her face, now freed from her shielding hands, as from a blind mask, glowed like a deep, still fire that throws out no flames. She was marvelously beautiful, yet terrible and miserable.

"Ah, Perdita! Perdita!"

Never, never will that man forget the movement of passion with which she approached him, the swift and silent wave that seemed to surge upon his breast, enveloping him, absorbing him, giving him for an instant a strange fear and joy of undergoing a sort of divine violence, of dissolving in a kind of warm and deadly humidity, as if the whole of the woman's body had become transformed into a mouth, which would presently absorb him wholly.

He closed his eyes; he forgot the world and his own glory. A shadowy and sacred depth seemed to establish itself within him, like some holy temple. His spirit became opaque and motionless, but all his senses as-

pired to transcend ordinary human limits, to seize the joy that is beyond impediments, to become sublime, to penetrate the deepest mysteries, to discover the most recondite secrets, to draw one rapture from another, as one draws one harmony from another; his senses became marvelous instruments, infinite virtues, realities certain as death. The surroundings seemed to vanish like vapor; in that blending of souls and bodies, all the energies and aspirations of the universe seemed to converge; heaven consecrated it; the shadowy silence threw over it a religious veil, accompanied by a faint murmur in the ears, like that which precedes death.

He opened his eyes, and beheld again the room, which had seemed to grow dark; through the open balcony he saw the far-off sky, the trees, the cupolas, the towers, and the distant lagoon, on the face of which the twilight was fast descending; he noted the blue and peaceful Eugeanean hills, like the wings of the earth folded in the repose of evening. He saw the forms of silence, and the silent form that clung to him like the bark to a tree.

The woman rested upon him with all her weight, holding him and covering him in that embrace, pressing her forehead against his shoulder in the endeavor to hide her face, clasping him in a suffocating, unrelaxing hold, like that of a corpse whose arms have grown stiff around a living form. It seemed as if she never could be detached from that embrace of the beloved one, except by the amputation of her arms. The young man felt, in that encircling embrace, the solidity and tenacity of the bones; at the same time he felt, upon his breast and along the length of his whole person, the softness of that body, which at intervals trembled upon him as running waters quiver when passing over a gravelly bed. Undefined ideas passed through his brain beneath that wave-like trembling, innumerable, continual, surging up from the depths, descending from the heights. They

passed and passed, more and more dense, more and more obscure, a troubled stream of life. And he suffered from her emotion, as well as from his own; he felt her to be his as the wood belongs to the flame that consumes it. He heard again the unexpected words that came after the wild wave of passion: "I must die!"

Again he turned his eyes toward the open balcony; he saw the gardens in the growing twilight, the lights appear in the neighboring houses, a single brilliant star in the melancholy sky, and fancied he could see the shining of a long, pale sword lying in the depths of the lagoon. He beheld the hill-tops blending with the evening shadows, and the infinity of distance stretching out toward distant lands rich with unknown treasure. There were things to be done in the world, conquests to be won, dreams to exalt, destinies to enforce, enigmas to solve, laurels to gather. Over there, in the dim beyond, were paths haunted with mystery, on which might be who could tell what strange encounters? Hidden joys might be passing there, with no one to meet them or recognize them. At that hour, somewhere in the world, was there not in existence an equal—a brother, or even a distant enemy, on whose brow, after a day of anxious waiting, might descend the dazzling inspiration that should give birth to a deathless masterpiece. Perhaps, at that hour, some one had just finished a great work, or had discovered at last some heroic reason for living. But he—he was the prisoner of his own body, lying under the weight of this despairing woman. Her magnificent destiny, full of sadness and of power, like a vessel loaded with gold and iron, was breaking itself against him as against a rock. What was Donatella Arvale doing that evening, on her Tuscan hill, in her melancholy home, near her stricken father? Was she tempering her will for a resolute struggle? Had she divined his secret? Was she pure?

He became inert under that embrace; his arms were pinioned by that rigid circle. A silent and motionless repulsion filled his being. A sadness as strong as pain invaded his heart. It seemed to him that the silence awaited some cry. His veins throbbed painfully under the weight upon him. And now, little by little, the desperate clasp relaxed, as if life itself were leaving the woman. Her former heartrending words recurred to him. A sudden terror seized him, at the apparition of a funereal fancy. But he did not move, nor speak, nor make any attempt to dissipate the cloud of anguish that had descended upon them. He had lost all realization of place and time. He saw this woman and himself in the midst of an endless plain, where sparse, burnt grass grew under a white sky. And they waited, waited for a voice to call them, a voice to comfort them. A confused dream sprang from his torpor, spread in waves through his brain, transformed itself, and terrified him like a nightmare. Now he seemed to be climbing the rocks with his companion; they were breathless, and the terrible anxiety of his beloved rendered his own anxiety more keen.

But he was startled into opening his eyes again at the sound of a bell. It was the bell of San Simeone Profeta, and it was so near that it seemed to be ringing in the room itself. The metallic sound pierced the ears as sharply as the thrust of a dagger.

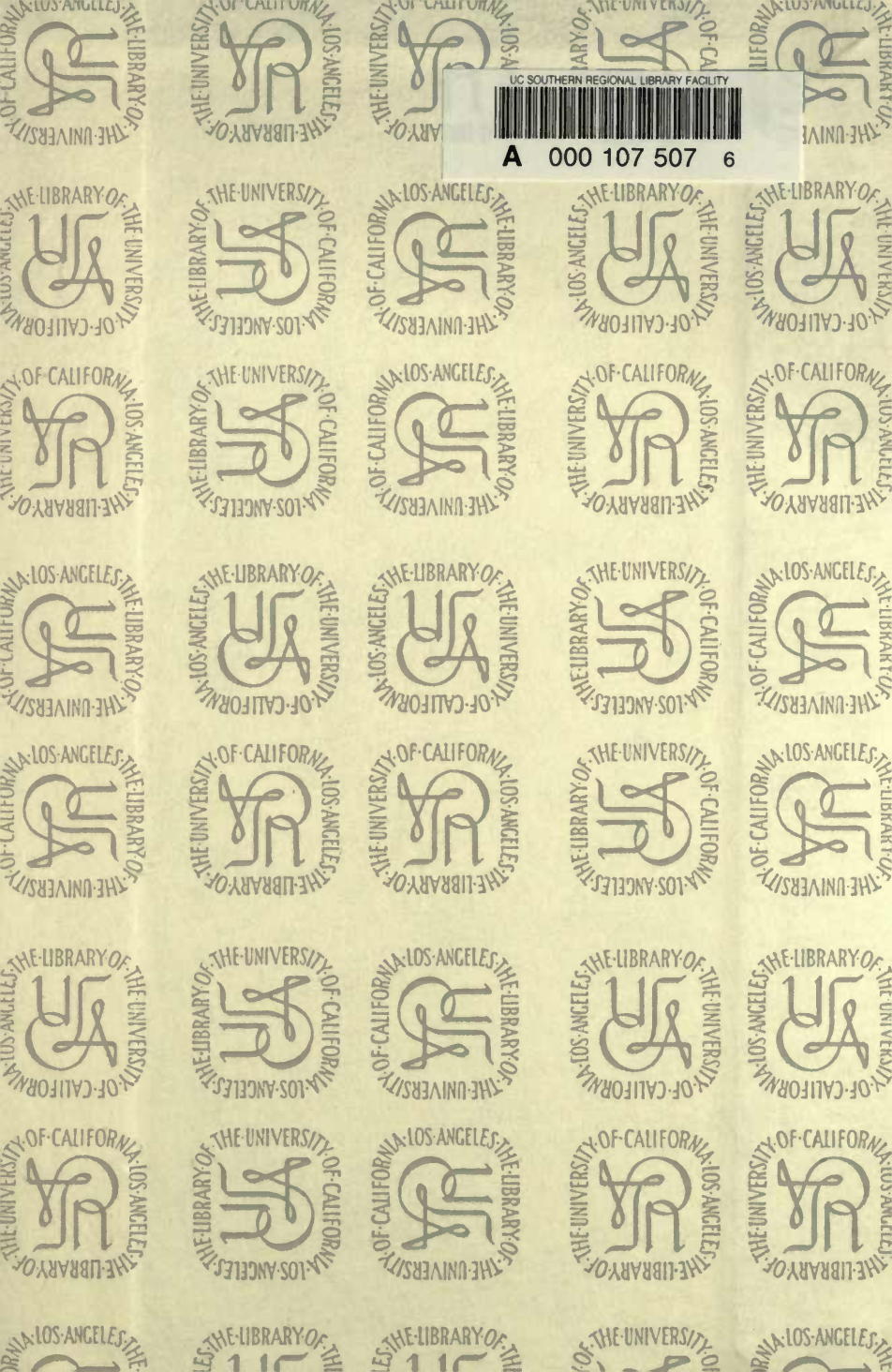
"Were you dreaming too?" he asked the woman, feeling that she was as inert as a dead body.

He raised one hand, and passed it gently over her hair, her cheek, her chin.

And, as if that touch had broken her heart, she burst into sobs. She wept and wept, on the bosom of her beloved, without dying there.

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15





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